

UNDERSTANDING AND REFRAMING KOREAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN
ELDELY EXPERIENCES OF DESPAIR: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL
APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING AND REFRAMING KOREAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ELDERLY EXPERIENCES OF DESPAIR: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

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This dissertation explores Korean American elderly Christians' despair through the contextual lenses of acculturation, ageism, and religious motivation, through the perspectives on despair of Søren Kierkegaard, Andrew Lester, and Erik Erikson, and through the psychological lens of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in order to develop pastoral practices to empower Korean American elderly Christians to confront despair and recover resilience from a Protestant Christian practical and pastoral theological perspective. Using a qualitative research approach, I conducted in-depth interviews with six Korean American elderly Christians in Southern California about their despair. Ten main themes emerged from these interviews: Lack of Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future; Maintaining Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future; Failure to Synthesize Human Possibility and Finitude; Success in Synthesizing Human Possibility and Finitude; Lack of Meaning; Maintaining Meaning; Lack of Agency; Practicing Agency; Failure to Accept Life as It Is; and Acceptance of Life as It Is.

These ten themes imply that Christian Korean American elderly immigrants experience intense despair. As immigrants, they suffer from acculturation stress, racism,

and complex family issues. Because of their age, they experience ageism, particularly internalized ageism, and hold negative core beliefs about themselves. Even though they receive social, cultural, and spiritual benefits from their participation in Christian practices, they are also disappointed with their churches and fellow members.

Even though my research partners suffered from regrets, failure to fulfill their human possibilities, and a lack of meaning, hope, and agency in certain aspects of their lives, they wisely used their resilient capabilities, found meaning in other aspects of their lives, and overcame their limited language and cultural knowledge using their talents. Pastoral care for and with this population needs to guide them to see their accumulated resilient power and to accept their pasts, presents, and futures. For this pastoral ministry, I suggest that pastoral caregivers and pastors regard this population as a group of little shepherds who have followed the Great Shepherd, use curiosity in order to learn wisdom from their stories of resilience, and guide them to live as spiritual elders in their churches, families, and communities. I also suggest that in order to effectively guide them to deal with their regrets, pastoral caregivers and pastors need to use and develop grief ministries to help them release the emotions associated with their regrets and to find their identities, meaning, and attachments.

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I am also grateful for my six research partners. They were great teachers as well as

helpers who taught me how I should age and how I should live as an immigrant. Their stories still live in my heart and lead me to think about how to help Korean American Christians. I would like to express my respect for them and tell them that they showed me wonderful examples of resilience and wisdom.

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Ultimately, I want to praise God. God has used my years at CST as God's useful tool to look into myself and to trust only in God. Yes, God, You are always the One who knows me and encourages me to keep going the way you have prepared for me.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This dissertation proposes a pastoral practice that combines the perspectives of Søren Kierkegaard's theology, the therapeutic perspectives of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and social perspectives on immigration, aging, and religion to empower Korean American elderly Christians to confront despair and recover resilience by challenging and reframing their core beliefs. Combining and revising Kierkegaard's, Andrew Lester's, and Erik Erikson's definitions of despair (to be discussed later in this work), I propose the following operational definition of despair:

Despair is a human experience which is characterized by a lack of hope for one's self, the world, and one's future. Despair arises from a failure to synthesize human possibility and finitude, a lack of meaning, a lack of agency, and a failure to accept one's life as it is, resulting in a lack of ego integrity.

Another key term that is part of my thesis is "core beliefs." I use cognitive behavioral therapist Judith Beck's understanding of core beliefs to define them as one's deepest level of beliefs and "one's most central ideas about the self."¹ Beck contends that negative core beliefs fall into two representative categories: "helplessness" and "unlovability."² According to her, people develop core beliefs beginning in childhood by interacting with significant others and their environments, and negative core beliefs tend to be global, overgeneralized, and absolute.³ This dissertation focuses on the core beliefs

¹ Judith S. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 166.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

developed by Korean American elderly Christians from their lives as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians.

Many Korean American elderly Christians experience despair in part due to the psychological, social, and spiritual stressors related to the adaptation and acculturation processes that are part of the immigration experience. In addition, culturally dissonant attitudes about aging and age discrimination in the United States complicate and deepen the experience of despair for these older adults. Having been involved with Korean immigrant congregations in the U.S. for 10 years, I have witnessed the consequences of despair on the physical, psychological, and spiritual health of elders in their congregations and families. I have found little assistance from practical and pastoral theology for addressing the multilayered despair of these adults. Thus, I propose a practical theological approach to assist pastoral caregivers in helping Korean American elderly Christians confront despair exacerbated by immigration issues.

I argue that Korean American elderly Christians can be empowered to confront despair and recover resilience by challenging and reframing their core beliefs. This proposed pastoral practice draws on the perspectives of Søren Kierkegaard's theology and the therapeutic lenses of CBT. In the pages that follow, I explore the theological meanings of Korean American elderly Christians' experiences of despair and respond to the problems of their despair from a Protestant Christian practical and pastoral theological perspective using social and psychological studies. The concepts of despair informing this dissertation are drawn primarily from the work of Kierkegaard and are supplemented by Andrew Lester's theological perspectives on despair and Erik Erikson's psychosocial developmental viewpoint. A pastoral practice of confronting despair and

developing resilience through reframing places CBT in a pastoral framework. I use Kierkegaard's concept of despair because, in my opinion, he provides a pertinent theological and existential framework through which pastoral caregivers can understand the despair of Korean American elderly Christians, and his perspectives on despair share common factors with CBT, such as valuing the importance of thoughts and the "here and now."

A. The Intersecting Challenges of Aging and Immigration

Aging is an emerging subject in practical and pastoral theology and the social sciences, but the focus of existing studies is mainly limited to clinical, social, and biblical issues, such as depression, poverty, and health and biblical perspectives on aging. These existing studies have failed to adequately address existential questions that emerge from aging. Many older adults do not simply experience depression but face deeper existential questions about their pasts, presents, and futures. Lester insists that even though depression and despair share the similar aspects of hopelessness, loss, and negative expectations about the future, despair is different from depression in that despair focuses more on meaning-oriented losses and the future, while in depression hopelessness and loss focus more on specific circumstances. Lester differentiates despair from depression as follows:

The sense of hopelessness is more specific in depression and more pervasive or universal in despair. Furthermore, clinical depression seems to be more specific in its attachment to here-and-now losses and disappointments; despair seems to be attached to a more universal loss of meaning and disillusionment with life. ... though clinically depressed persons often feel helpless about the future and may think about it negatively, despairing persons have a more philosophically nuanced ability to describe a future void of meaning.⁴

⁴ Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 73.

Without a chance to make up for their past mistakes, despairing persons find it hard to accept that death is near and may be overwhelmed with bitterness, defeat, and hopelessness. Because of the closeness of death, the despair of older adults is an important issue in the study and care of the aging.

While the despair of elderly people in general has not been adequately addressed, the subject of despair is especially critical to Korean American elderly immigrants because they experience various psychological, social, and existential issues as immigrants due to major life transitions related to immigrating to the United States. Immigration, Ting-Yin Lee suggests, involves “a psycho-social-geographical transition that involves a series of losses and changes, ... changes in one’s identity, as inner change tries to match outer change.”⁵ Lee also points out that immigration differs from developmental stages in the human life cycle and is not a one-time event because immigrants experience social status changes in the short run and stresses from these changes over a longer period of time.⁶ As a result, immigration may have detrimental and accumulative effects on elderly Korean immigrants when they are forced to change their identities, and this may cause them to have difficulties finding meaning in their immigration experience. According to Nam Soon Park and her colleagues, elderly Korean immigrants have the highest depression rate and levels among five major Asian American ethnic groups (Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean).⁷ However, this population has received little interest from practical and pastoral theologians and

⁵ Ting-Yin Lee, "The Loss and Grief in Immigration: Pastoral Care for Immigrants," *Pastoral Psychology* 59 (2010): 159.

⁶ Ibid., 160.

⁷ Nan Sook Park et al., "An Empirical Typology of Social Networks and Its Association With Physical and Mental Health: A Study With Older Korean Immigrants," *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 70, no. 1 (2015): 68.

gerontologists. The lack of sufficient empirical data and unanswered questions about the social, psychological, and spiritual welfare of this population warrant study in this area.⁸

Changes caused by immigration are distinctive from other social changes and are common to most immigrants, but immigrants and their pastoral caregivers do not pay sufficient attention to the distinctiveness and ubiquity of the changes. Lee describes the distinctive, shared, and disregarded issues of immigration as follows:

Immigration is unique as a social experience in that few other social experiences involve so many social “adjustments” at the same time. However, the experience of multiple, rapid change in one’s life is what is common to all immigrants. Most immigrants and pastors who care for immigrants fail to realize the significance of both the severity and cumulative effect of the various life changes associated with immigration because it is so common.⁹

As described by Lee, immigration is a unique social experience in that immigrants have to go through sudden and intense changes in their identities, families, languages, and social statuses, and immigrants have to experience significant transitions as soon as they immigrate to another country.

The tremendous transitions caused by immigration involve the acculturation process, during which immigrants usually suffer from acculturative stresses.

Acculturation, as defined by Ada C. Mui and Suk-Young Kang, is “a process by which one cultural group adopts the beliefs and practices of a host culture.”¹⁰ They point out that immigrants, particularly elderly immigrants, have to adjust in “physical, psychological, financial, spiritual, social, language, and family” areas, and this

⁸ Ada C. Mui, "Stress, Coping, and Depression among Elderly Korean Immigrants," in *Psychosocial Aspects of the Asian-American Experience: Diversity within Diversity*, ed. Namkee G. Choi (New York: Haworth Press, 2001), 282.

⁹ Lee, "The Loss and Grief in Immigration: Pastoral Care for Immigrants," 162.

¹⁰ Ada C. Mui and Suk-Young Kang, "Acculturation Stress and Depression among Asian Immigrant Elders," *Social Work* 51, no. 3 (July, 2006): 244.

adjustment process can cause stress for elderly immigrants because they tend not to have enough resources in terms of income, education, and English proficiency.¹¹

Levels of acculturation affect both directly and indirectly the levels of mental health of immigrants. A study by Yuri Jang and David A. Chiriboga demonstrates that greater mental health of immigrants depends heavily on higher levels of acculturation, and “low levels of acculturation may not only directly erode mental well-being but may also have indirect effects by making individuals more prone to acculturative stress.”¹²

Researchers commonly discuss five categories of acculturation stressors:

physical (e.g., new living space and populations), biological (e.g., new foods and diseases), cultural (e.g., different politics, economics, language, and religious affiliations), social relationships (e.g., change status from majority group to minority group), and psychological (e.g., shifts in mental health status such as attitude, values, and beliefs).¹³

Acculturation stressors induce several symptoms, such as “feelings of marginality and alienation, psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion,” and these symptoms are deeply correlated to depression among Korean Americans.¹⁴

Using qualitative and descriptive methods with six elderly Korean immigrants in Chicago, Young-Me Lee conducted preliminary research on elderly Korean immigrants’ perceptions of stressors.¹⁵ According to Lee, this research identified eight specific stressors: “language barriers, isolation and loneliness, dependence upon their children,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Yuri Jang and David A. Chiriboga, "Living in a Different World: Acculturative Stress Among Korean American Elders," *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* 65 (B), no. 1 (2009): 14-15.

¹³ So-Youn Park and Kunsook Song Bernstein, "Depression and Korean American Immigrants," *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 22, no. 1 (February 2008): 14.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Young-Me Lee, "Immigration Experience among Elderly Korean Immigrants," *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 14, no. 4 (2007): 403-10.

fear of being a burden, financial problems, transportation problems, discrimination, and fear of death because of health problems.”¹⁶ She also reports that elderly Korean immigrants in Chicago struggle with changes from a traditional filial value system in which elderly people are respected by their children, grandchildren, and other younger relatives, diminished power and authority in the family and society, and the desire to live independent lives and not be a burden on their adult children.¹⁷ According to Lee, for elderly Korean immigrants, limited English proficiency is the hardest issue, and this and transportation issues together are primary causes of isolation and loneliness.¹⁸ Research also shows that elderly Korean immigrants fear being a burden to their children because they tend to care about their adult children’s success and interests more than their own wellbeing.¹⁹ Lee concludes that these stressors and the changes in their family dynamics lead elderly Korean immigrants to feel strong shame, to regard themselves as powerless and useless, and to avoid or repress their emotions.²⁰

As pointed out, the barrier of limited English is the most stressful factor in the acculturation process of elderly Korean immigrants. According to Ada Mui and her co-researchers, this is because the language barrier aggravates acculturation stresses when it is associated with other factors, such as “prejudice, micro-aggression, overt racism, and

¹⁶ Young-Me Lee, "Immigration Experience among Elderly Korean Immigrants," *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 14, no. 4 (2007): 406-08.

¹⁷ Ibid., 408.

¹⁸ Ibid., 407.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 409.

discrimination.”²¹ Furthermore, Mui et al. emphasize, for elderly Korean immigrants the language barrier becomes a socially imposed “disability” that causes “social isolation, a sense of insecurity, lack of access to important information provided by the mainstream media, an inability to make friends, and many other social and psychological losses.”²²

Mui et al. describe the emotional difficulties immigrants have because of limited English:

Immigrants with a poor command of English can feel disabled when their inability to communicate leads to fear about being victimized or stigmatized, worry about interpersonal discomfort and embarrassment, or stress over other’s reactions to their inability to communicate in the dominant language.²³

The problem of learning English is greater for elderly Korean immigrants than for younger generations because, as Lee points out, it is much harder for elderly people to learn new languages.²⁴

All categories of acculturation stress are directly and indirectly connected with elderly Korean immigrants’ mental health, particularly depressive symptoms. According to Mui and Kang, elderly immigrants in the United States tend to have higher depression rates than non-immigrants due to acculturation stresses, poverty, and changes in family dynamics.²⁵ Eunkyung Yoon reports that elderly Korean immigrants suffer from deeper depression than any other immigrant group.²⁶ This is likely because elderly Korean immigrants have a short immigration history, are more dependent on their adult children,

²¹ Ada C. Mui et al., “English Language Proficiency and Health-Related Quality of Life among Chinese and Korean Immigrant Elders,” *Health and Social Work* 32, no. November 2 (2007): 125.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lee, “The Loss and Grief in Immigration: Pastoral Care for Immigrants,” 167.

²⁵ Mui and Kang, “Acculturation Stress and Depression among Asian Immigrant Elders,” 244.

²⁶ Eunkyung Yoon, “A Stress Coping Model for Older Koreans: Effects of Social Support and Religiosity on Depression” (PhD. diss., The University of Georgia, 2004), 46.

and are overly dependent on their Korean cultural orientation in their acculturation processes.

In research comparing intergenerational relationships among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants, Masako Ishii-Kuntz reports that elderly Korean immigrants tend to have more frequent interaction with relatives and/or friends and to be more financially and emotionally dependent on their adult children than Chinese and Japanese counterparts.²⁷ Ishii-Kuntz also reports that elderly Korean immigrants need more support from their adult children because elderly Korean immigrants have shorter immigrant lives in the U.S. and more adjustment issues than their counterparts.²⁸ This means that among the three Asian American groups, elderly Korean immigrants are the least acculturated and are under the strongest influence from their own traditional values.²⁹

Ageism is another important contributor to the despair of elderly Korean immigrants, especially because of the gap between their cultural expectation of being respected and the reality of attitudes toward the elderly in the United States. *Ageism* can be defined as “socially imposed negative behaviors and attitudes toward and perspectives on aging.” In research on the employment issues of 36 older Korean immigrants aged 50 and older in Los Angeles, Min-Kyoung Rhee, Iris Chi, and Jaehee Yi compared elderly Korean immigrants to other elderly Asian ethnic groups and concluded that obtaining jobs is particularly important to elderly Korean immigrants. According to them, this is

²⁷ Masako Ishii-Kuntz, "Intergenerational Relationships among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans," *Family Relations* 46, no. 1 (January, 1997): 28.

²⁸ Ibid., 30.

²⁹ Ibid., 31.

because elderly Korean immigrants have the highest percentage of people at or below poverty (23%) compared to Japanese (5%) and Filipinos (8%).³⁰ Rhee, Chi, and Yi state that participants reported ageism as the most common obstacle to their employment, and they experienced ageism mainly from Korean American employers because elderly Korean immigrants seek jobs mostly in the Korean community due to their language and cultural differences from the dominant culture.³¹ However, some participants responded that they also experienced ageism outside the Korean community.³² Rhee, Chi, and Yi conclude that elderly Korean immigrants face challenges in acquiring jobs because of their age, and this leads to poverty.³³ More importantly, based on this research, elderly Korean immigrants themselves internalize ageism, and their internalized ageism causes them to express negative attitudes toward themselves.³⁴ Because of both external and internalized ageism, elderly Korean immigrants feel inferior, and this may cause elderly Korean immigrants to experience despair.

Elderly Korean immigrants also have a high possibility of experiencing despair because of the gaps between their expectations of being respected by their family members and a reality contrary to their expectations. Indeed, Hae-Ra Han et al. contend that elderly Korean immigrants experience “discrepancies between expectations and achievements after immigration.”³⁵ Korean American immigrants usually have high

³⁰ Min-Kyoung Rhee, Iris Chi, and Jaehee Yi, "Understanding Employment Barriers Among Older Korean Immigrants," *The Gerontologist* (2013): 2.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 2.

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ Hae-Ra Han et al., "Correlates of Depression in the Korean American Elderly: Focusing on Personal Resources of Social Support," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 22 (2007): 116.

expectations for better and successful lives in the United States, but, as described previously, they actually struggle with acculturation stresses, losses, depression, and discrimination because of their age. In addition, Irene J. Kim, Luke I. C. Kim, and James G. Kelly point out that, based on Confucian culture, elderly Korean immigrants tend to have very high expectations for filial piety, i.e., they expect respect and emotional and financial support from their children, but their children acculturated to U.S. culture may not meet these expectations.³⁶ This gap between their high filial expectations and their children's actual practices of filial piety may exacerbate despair. Thus, the acculturation process, acculturation stresses, ageism, and the discrepancies between expectations and reality all may contribute to elderly Korean immigrants' despair.

B. Understanding Despair from Multiple Perspectives

Because despair is often a prominent feature of an elderly Korean immigrant's experience, a deeper understanding is required. In this section, I explore the definitions of Kierkegaard, Lester, and Erikson. Kierkegaard provides an understanding of despair relevant to the experience of elderly Korean immigrants. His concept of despair is based on his definition of a human being. He begins his book, *The Sickness unto Death*, with the statement, "A human being is spirit."³⁷ Kierkegaard maintains that despair is basically a sickness of the spirit and is different from all temporary emotional problems, "such as dejection, [and] inner conflict, which pass without developing into despair."³⁸

³⁶ Irene J. Kim, Luke I. C. Kim, and James G. Kelly, "Developing Cultural Competence in Working with Korean Immigrant Families," *Journal of Community Psychology* 34, no. 2 (2006): 155-56.

³⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

He also describes a human being as a self that is “composed of infinitude and finitude,” and as a synthesis between infinitude and finitude.³⁹ He calls this synthesis a relation; the self is not the relation itself, but “the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation.”⁴⁰ Kierkegaard summarizes his concept as follows: “The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself.”⁴¹ Accordingly, despair is a sickness of a self and comes from the self’s failure to integrate the infinite and the finite.

Kierkegaard also views despair as the self’s failure to become itself. He insists that becoming oneself means to become concrete, and, in order to become concrete, the self needs to go through a process of infinitely moving away from itself in possibility and moving back to itself in necessity through sustaining both possibility and necessity.⁴² In other words, the self needs to engage in a process of infinitely seeking possibility in itself and, at the same time, of realizing its limitations. This means that to become a concrete self requires integrating the infinite and the finite in dynamic ways. Kierkegaard’s view thus illumines a possible path out of despair for elderly Korean immigrants.

That a human being is a spirit, a self, and a synthesis of the infinite and the finite is not enough to explain who or what a human being is. Kierkegaard adds one more aspect to the concept of a human being in order to give it a thicker description: human beings are made by God the Creator. With the added concept of God, Kierkegaard states that a human self is a relational creature: “The human self is such a derived, established

³⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

⁴² Ibid., 29-30.

relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another.”⁴³ Kierkegaard states that a real human being becomes a self when he/she relates him-/herself to the power (God) which has created him/her.⁴⁴

To Kierkegaard, despair is paradoxical in that despair is a sickness unto death, but, at the same time, despair comes from the inability to die. To him, despair is quite different from physical sickness that ends with death because, based on his Christian viewpoint of death, death is a gateway into life.⁴⁵ In this sense, despair is not a sickness unto death. However, despair becomes a sickness unto death when a person experiences the real despair that he cannot die even when he wants to die. Kierkegaard says:

But in another sense despair is even more definitely the sickness unto death. ... the torment of despair is precisely this inability to die. Thus it has more in common with the situation of a mortally ill person when he lies struggling with death and yet cannot die. Thus to be sick *unto* death is to be unable to die, yet not as if there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness is that there is not even the ultimate hope, death. When death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die.⁴⁶

Based on this description, despair signifies that people cannot get rid of themselves even when they want to get rid of themselves. This inability to dispose of oneself intensifies despair. Kierkegaard says:

In despairing over something, he really despaired over himself, and now he wants to be rid of himself. ... what is intolerable to him is that he cannot get rid of himself. ... he despairs over not being able to get rid of himself. ... He is consuming himself. But this is precisely what he in his despair [wants] and this is precisely what he to his torment cannot do, since the despair has inflamed

⁴³ Ibid., 13-14.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

something that cannot burn or be burned up in the self.⁴⁷

In other words, Kierkegaard proposes that the principle of despair is that a person despairs over something, but internally and spiritually he despairs over himself and, as a result, he tries to get rid of himself. However, the final result of despair is that he cannot get rid of himself. Despair begins with despairing over something, but this despair is not “proper” despair.⁴⁸ Proper despair, which comes after despairing over something, is despair over oneself, which Kierkegaard calls “declared despair.”⁴⁹ For him, “To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself—this is the formula for all despair.”⁵⁰ Therefore, to despair over something results in despairing over oneself, and to despair over oneself is the result of all kinds of despair. Kierkegaard divides despair into three categories: despair as defined by finitude/infinity, despair as defined by possibility/necessity, and despair as defined by consciousness. These categories will be reviewed in Chapter 4 when I engage in theological reflection on the idea of despair.

Kierkegaard’s concept of despair shares two common factors with CBT: the importance of thought and a focus on the present. In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard emphasizes that despair is deeply related to doubt. He contends that doubt comes from human thought, but despair comes from the whole human personality. In other words, a human being despairs because his personality deeply doubts something. Kierkegaard says, “Doubt is thought’s despair; despair is personality’s doubt. ... Doubt is the inner

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

movement in thought itself.”⁵¹ Therefore, to Kierkegaard, despair is broader and more complex than doubt: “Despair is an expression of the total personality, doubt only of thought.”⁵² Thought, as the origin of doubt, influences the total personality, and this doubt becomes despair when doubt is intensified. Hence, like CBT, pastoral care and practical theological reflection on the despair of elderly Korean immigrants benefit from focusing on thought as the starting point of despair.

Kierkegaard’s concept of despair also focuses on the present, just as CBT pays more attention to the “here and now” than the past or the future. To Kierkegaard, despair is always in the present even though it comes from the past, and despairers bring despair on themselves through their choices. Therefore, despair is one’s own choice and not to be in despair requires destroying the possibility of despair at every moment.⁵³ Therefore, overcoming despair requires a decision-making process, and Kierkegaard describes this decision-making process as “the battle of faith,” in which despairers use their will to believe that God can do anything in any situation.⁵⁴ However, Kierkegaard’s perspective on despair is individualistic, and he does not consider the social contexts in which each person experiences despair. So, because Erik Erikson emphasizes the importance of the social location of those who despair, I incorporate Erikson’s perspective on despair into this work in order to understand despair in a more holistic way.

Andrew Lester draws on Kierkegaard in his book, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, to point out that people under stress and in crises are more likely to

⁵¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 211.

⁵² Ibid., 212.

⁵³ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38-39.

experience despair.⁵⁵ To Lester, despair is “one of the most oppressive aspects of cognitive, affective, and spiritual suffering” and “a cognitive and affective response to philosophical/spiritual problems rooted in or leading to negative perceptions about the future.”⁵⁶ For him, despair is deeply related to a lack of meaning in life and to the ability to think about life philosophically.⁵⁷ Lester also emphasizes that exploring despair in pastoral care and counseling is essential and recommends that every pastoral caregiver explore issues caused by despair in their work.⁵⁸

Lester points out that despair is rooted in cognitive, affective, and spiritual difficulties. I think this perspective on despair shows that CBT, which emphasizes changing cognition for better affection and behavior, could effectively address these difficulties because in CBT, a change of cognition is not, as pointed out by Albert Ellis and Catharine MacLaren, a simple cognitive change but involves “profound philosophical changes” through which despairers can alleviate existential/philosophical/spiritual issues they are confronting.⁵⁹

Beck et al. define *cognition* as “verbal or pictorial ‘events’ in [one’s] stream of consciousness,” and a cognition is “either a thought or a visual image” people cannot recognize if they do not attend to it.⁶⁰ They describe cognitions as follows:

Characteristically, a cognition is an appraisal of events from any time perspective (past, present, or future). The typical cognitions observed in depression and other

⁵⁵ Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 80.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 6, 73.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁹ Albert Ellis and Catharine MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 2nd ed. (Atascadero, CA: Impact Publisher, 2005), 16.

⁶⁰ Aaron T. Beck et al., *Cognitive Therapy of Depression* (New York: Guilford Press, 1979), 3, 147.

clinical disorders are often described as “automatic thoughts,” part of a habitual pattern of thinking... cognitions are generally viewed by the individual as factual representations of reality and hence, tend to be believed. Since his cognitions are automatic, habitual, and believable, the individual rarely assesses their validity.⁶¹

Based on the work of Beck and his colleagues, this dissertation defines *cognition* as conscious cognitive activity, that is, thinking or a thought, and uses the terms *cognition* and *thought* interchangeably.

If immigrants’ circumstances are viewed from Lester’s perspective on despair, immigration stresses can cause despair after losses and grief. Immigrants usually lose familiar persons, familiar environments, and familiar roles, and they grieve these losses. Lester insists that such losses are one cause of despair and a big change in circumstances commonly causes despair.⁶² As he points out, older people are more likely to experience loss and grief and, as a result, despair: “Aging persons face the constant loss of future stories as spouses, friends, and family (even adult children) die, as the ability to participate in meaningful tasks ceases, and as loss of bodily functions focuses attention on debilitation.”⁶³ Elderly Korean Americans immigrants likely suffer from more losses, intense grief, and strong despair. Therefore, pastoral caregivers for this population need to address this important issue in their pastoral practices. For Kierkegaard, human beings despair when they fail to become themselves, and for Lester, they despair when they fail to find philosophical meaning in their lives.

From a developmental psychological viewpoint, in *Childhood and Society*, Erik Erikson insists that human beings despair when they fail to accept their lives as their lives

⁶¹ Ibid., 147.

⁶² Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 74-75.

⁶³ Ibid., 75.

are. He describes stages of development that cover the entire human lifespan, from infancy through old age. These stages are delineated by the psychosocial crisis that characterizes each one: basic trust vs. basic mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair. Erikson defines *ego integrity* as accepting what has gone before as inevitable and satisfying: “It is the acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions.”⁶⁴ Erikson insists that a person in the stage of ego integrity can “defend the dignity of his own lifestyle against all physical and economic threats.”⁶⁵ On the other hand, according to Erikson, despair often occurs when the elderly feel that they have made many wrong decisions, yet time is too short to find an alternative route to integrity, and that they have wasted their lives.⁶⁶ He emphasizes that the styles of ego integrity depend on the expectations of the society to which an individual belongs and the “historical place” in which an individual lives.⁶⁷ So, ego integrity and despair are deeply influenced by religion, politics, economics, technology, arts, and science, and ego integrity comes when an individual follows the good examples that his/her society and historical place present. Alternatively, individuals despair when they do not or cannot follow the examples society expects them to follow.⁶⁸ Erikson emphasizes the social aspects of despair, which are absent in Kierkegaard’s viewpoint on

⁶⁴ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963), 268.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 269.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

despair, so Erikson's concept of despair illuminates the social aspects of the despair of elderly Korean American Christians.

C. Breaking the Hold of Despair

How might pastoral caregivers help elderly Korean immigrants break free from the hold of despair? The practice I propose builds on Kierkegaard's understanding of the origins of despair as a theological foundation and uses CBT's approach to human mental struggles as a clinical lens. CBT is mainly based on the theory that individuals' interpretations of environmental stimuli and their emotions and behaviors come from their cognitions.⁶⁹ CBT is usually regarded as an effective therapeutic approach for depression. It assumes that the cognition of depressed people consists of three patterns (a cognitive triad) in which patients consider themselves, the world, and their futures in a negative manner.⁷⁰ The first component of the cognitive triad is depressed people's tendency to view themselves "as defective, inadequate, diseased, or deprived" and to think their negative experiences are caused by their own weaknesses.⁷¹ The second component is that depressed people think the world puts too many demands on them and/or prevents them from accomplishing their purposes.⁷² The third component is depressed patients' anticipation that their current problems will not be solved in the future and they will fail in whatever they do.⁷³

⁶⁹ Evan M. Forman and James D. Herbert, "New Directions in Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Acceptance-Based Therapies," in *General Principles and Empirically Supported Techniques of Cognitive Behavior Therapy*, ed. William T. O'Donohue, and Jane E. Fisher (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 77.

⁷⁰ Beck et al., *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, 11.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Two types of CBT psychotherapies are the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy of Albert Ellis and the Cognitive Therapy of Aaron T. Beck. In *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, Albert Ellis writes that he devised Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) when he concluded, after six years' practice in the psychodynamic field, that psychodynamic theory was not effective for his patients.⁷⁴ He says that insights clients gain from psychodynamic therapy are not helpful for “deep and lasting change” in that the insights just “result in extremely unhelpful self-pity and have a ‘retraumatizing’ effect on some individuals” and they do not show them “what they are now doing to keep alive the hurts and horrors of the past.”⁷⁵ Ellis maintains that insights about the past sometimes prevent clients from realizing and changing currently dysfunctional lives.⁷⁶

Ellis explains that REBT endeavors to help people improve their emotional and behavioral functioning through changing their irrational beliefs to rational beliefs.⁷⁷ These changes are possible through REBT's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral methods. These changes are not simple cognitive changes but “profound philosophical changes” that are qualitatively different from simple optimism.⁷⁸ Thus, Ellis claims that clients can use these profound philosophical changes successfully when they face adversity, such as when they experience despair.⁷⁹

In Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors: New Directions for

⁷⁴ Ellis and MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5, 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Ellis theorizes that most clients share three similar irrational beliefs: “(a) ‘I must achieve outstandingly well in one or more important respects or I am an inadequate person!’ (b) ‘Other people must treat me fairly and well or they are bad people!’ (c) ‘Conditions must be favorable or else my life is rotten and I can’t stand it!’”⁸⁰ When people have at least one of these three irrational beliefs, they tend to be disturbed emotionally and behaviorally. In REBT, therapists try to help clients replace their “shoulds” and “demands” with “desires” and “preferences,” which give them much more flexibility.⁸¹ Elderly Korean immigrants need this flexibility to deal with their despair because they tend to experience despair as a result of maintaining strict and high expectations of success and of their children’s emotional and financial support.

In REBT, negative feelings are divided into two categories: healthy and unhealthy. REBT regards all feelings as a normal result of thoughts and experiences; likewise, negative feelings arising from negative thoughts and experiences are viewed as natural. But only negative feelings which generate individual and social benefits are seen as healthy negative feelings, such as “sorrow, regret, frustration, and annoyance,” rather than “panic, depression, rage, and self-pity.”⁸² The latter are unhealthy because they are produced by absolutist *shoulds* and prevent people from accomplishing their goals.⁸³

To help clients change their absolutistic attitudes, Ellis emphasizes the importance of unconditional self-acceptance. REBT’s idea of unconditional self-acceptance is based on the notion that humans cannot be rated as good or bad according to some of their

⁸⁰ Albert Ellis, *Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors: New Directions for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001), 61.

⁸¹ Ellis and MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 21.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

behaviors or performances.⁸⁴ Ellis insists that clients who unconditionally accept themselves move towards alleviating their dysfunctional emotions. He also criticizes Carl Rogers' notion of unconditional positive regard because he sees this as just conditional acceptance that leads clients to accept themselves only when their therapists accept them.⁸⁵ Ellis claims that unconditional self-acceptance means that people unconditionally accept themselves as good humans even though their performance is poor or bad, and this acceptance helps them feel better and get better.⁸⁶

Moreover, Ellis emphasizes unconditional acceptance of others' essences as well as one's own and conditional rating of only one's own and others' external traits, because our emotional problems are directly or indirectly related to rating ours and others' essences. Rating only external traits rather than essences is a way of alleviating emotional problems.⁸⁷ In my opinion, his notion of unconditional acceptance is a corollary to Kierkegaard's and Erikson's notions of despair in that both Kierkegaard and Erikson view despair as not being able to accept the self as it is. Ellis's unconditional acceptance is essential for elderly Korean immigrants because they tend to rate their essences based on their external performances, such as their proficiency in English, and social stereotypes, such as ageism and racism. Thus, a pastoral practice for elderly Korean immigrants using CBT focuses on helping them to accept themselves as they are.

As described previously, rational thinking is important for remedying dysfunctional emotions and behaviors. To Ellis, *rational thinking* is thinking that helps

⁸⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁵ Ellis, *Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors: New Directions for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy*, 25.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 76.

individuals and groups become efficient in surviving and achieving their own aims, and *irrational thinking* interferes with their well-being in rigid and absolutized ways.⁸⁸ In other words, people with rational beliefs demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, and consistency with their social environments, allowing them to accomplish their own happiness, while people with irrational beliefs are “rigid, dogmatic, inconsistent with social reality” and usually have their irrational beliefs interfere with the pursuit of their goals.⁸⁹ In these descriptions, being rational or irrational is individualistic and social at the same time because REBT considers individual happiness to exist in a social context: “a balance between self-interest and social-interest.”⁹⁰

However, Ellis does not give us a perspective on irrational social reality, such as ageism and racism. He does not mention that societies can have irrational beliefs, instead simply insisting that personal happiness is possible only when a person aligns with his/her social reality. A purpose of REBT is to help people adjust personal beliefs to social reality, but two purposes of this dissertation are to point out that personally internalized ageism and racism are connected to an irrational social reality and to focus on how to overcome this social influence. Thus, through the lense of CBT, negative beliefs and stereotypes that are perpetuated by society and adopted by older adults can be challenged and altered.⁹¹

The Cognitive Therapy (CT) of Aaron Beck has been prominent among

⁸⁸ Ellis and MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 19.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹¹ Jill Snodgrass, "Toward Holistic Care: Integrating Spirituality and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Older Adults," *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging* 21, no. 3 (2009): 224.

psychotherapies because of its efficacy in the treatment of depression and other psychological problems.⁹² CT's main theoretical principle is that "an individual's affect and behavior are largely determined by the way in which he structures the world."⁹³ CT's treatment, as a result, focuses mainly on restructuring clients' cognitions while emphasizing the importance of behavioral and emotional changes.⁹⁴

In *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, Beck et al. describe Cognitive Therapy as "an active, directive, time-limited, structured approach used to treat a variety of psychiatric disorders."⁹⁵ According to them, CT differs from traditional psychotherapy in two distinctive ways. First, CT uses a collaborative empiricism in which therapists actively interact with patients and design therapy structures through which therapists encourage patients to participate in the therapy process more actively.⁹⁶ Judith S. Beck argues, in *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*, that although therapists' directive and didactic roles are emphasized, the therapeutic relationship between therapists and patients is also emphasized, and CT views therapy as a "teamwork" process in which therapists and patients work together as colleagues, and patients actively express their own agendas during the therapy.⁹⁷

A number of studies indicate that CBT is an effective form of psychotherapy for elderly people and, particularly, for Asian people. For example, in a study with 159

⁹² Elizabeth B. Yost et al., *Group Cognitive Therapy: A Treatment Approach for Depressed Older Adults* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), 6.

⁹³ Beck et al., *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, 3.

⁹⁴ Yost et al., *Group Cognitive Therapy: A Treatment Approach for Depressed Older Adults*, 8.

⁹⁵ Beck et al., *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁷ Beck, *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*, 6.

Korean immigrant participants, Yongseok Kim concluded that “cognitive control,” which means “subjective perceptions or evaluations of control over respondents’ life circumstances,” was the most important factor in mediating the acculturation stressors and depression of the participants and that this conclusion is congruent with CBT’s emphasis.⁹⁸ CBT is also congruent with elderly Korean Americans’ preferences, because, according to George K. Hong, when Asian people experience life difficulties they tend to seek direct guidelines for and solutions to their life situations from an authority figure and to focus on problem-solving rather than talking about emotions and feelings in psychotherapy.⁹⁹ Likewise, Park and Bernstein recommend “structured and problem-solving therapeutic approaches” to help Korean Americans deal with acculturation stresses and depression because of Korean immigrants’ structured and problem-solving approaches.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Pang concluded from her research on Korean elderly immigrants’ expressions of their depression that Korean elderly immigrants tend to think they can overcome their emotional and psychological problems by depending on their wills and thinking, and they already use various cognitive and behavioral strategies, such as “attempting to forget unpleasant events, and diverting oneself from negative thoughts.”¹⁰¹ Pang explains,

⁹⁸ Yongseok Kim, "The Role of Cognitive Control in Mediating the Effect of Stressful Circumstances among Korean Immigrants," *Health and Social Work* 27, no. 1 (February, 2002): 36.

⁹⁹ George K. Hong, "Contextual Factors in Psychotherapy with Asian Americans," in *Transference and Empathy in Asian American Psychotherapy: Cultural Values and Treatment Needs*, ed. Jean Lau Chin, Joan Huser Liem, Mary Anna Domokos-Cheng Ham, and George K. Hong (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Park and Bernstein, "Depression and Korean American Immigrants," 17.

¹⁰¹ Keum Young Chung Pang, "Understanding Depression among Elderly Korean Immigrants through Their Folk Illnesses," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1994): 212-13.

Despite the many possible causes of depression they listed, informants did not believe that depression was an inevitable result of these factors; they considered its onset to be subject to individual will. One informant remarked, “You can control depression. You can express it, or you can keep it to yourself.” Another said, “It depends on what you think. You do not have to have depression if you really do not want to.”¹⁰²

As described by Pang, elderly Korean immigrants tend to think depression can be controlled by human will and thought, and this makes CBT easily accepted by them and highly appropriate for use with them.

Elizabeth B. Yost and her colleagues have shown that CBT is a very effective therapy for elderly people for three reasons, in spite of elderly people’s obvious depressive factors. First, most elderly people’s unpleasant life circumstances are unavoidable, and cognitive modification is the most effective approach for dealing with such situations.¹⁰³ Second, CBT focuses on the improvement of their negative cognitions, and this encourages them to attend to the smallest improvements in their cognitions.¹⁰⁴ Third, they usually have much more time to think than younger people, and cognitive activities are more meaningful to them.¹⁰⁵ Review of their lives and reflection on current situations are main avenues for both their pleasure and depression, and CBT can reinforce their positive emotions and alleviate their negative ones.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, the effectiveness of CBT for elderly people, in spite of the decline of their fluid intelligence, which is the capability to solve new problems, has been demonstrated by the research of Elizabeth K. Doubleday, Paul King, and Costas

¹⁰² Ibid., 212.

¹⁰³ Yost et al., *Group Cognitive Therapy: A Treatment Approach for Depressed Older Adults*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Papageorgiou.¹⁰⁷ These researchers studied the relationship between the fluid intelligence of older adults and the therapeutic effectiveness of CBT and supportive counseling for the treatment of the anxiety disorders of 32 community-dwelling older adults. They found that the outcomes of supportive counseling in which the older adults needed to use abstract reasoning depended on the adults' levels of fluid intelligence, but the outcomes of CBT did not have any such limitations, making CBT an effective therapeutic approach for older adults. Doubleday, King, and Papageorgiou determined there were three possible characteristics of CBT that led to a demand for fewer abstract reasoning abilities: its use of an agenda for each session, homework, and its focus on a few concrete topics.¹⁰⁸

Thus, CBT usually matches the preferences and needs of elderly Korean immigrants and is an effective pastoral practice. I believe this is partly due to the centrality of biblical teaching in Korean American Christians' lives: sermons and Bible studies, for example, are rich soil in which reframing of existing ideas happens with much regularity. Such reframing in the church context is often expected and regarded as a positive capacity of pastoral caregivers. With such soil in place, CBT's method of challenging cognitive structures can prove to be a very effective tool in touching the inner lives of Korean American immigrant elderly Christians.

As an example of such a pastoral practice of utilizing biblical passages, I offer a reflection on a passage from Acts. When Paul was confronted by the epiphany of Jesus on his way to Damascus in Acts 9, he was led to the house of Judas to stay there. He is said

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth K. Doubleday, Paul King, and Costas Papageorgiou, "Relationship between Fluid Intelligence and Ability to Benefit from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy in Older Adults: A Preliminary Investigation," *British Journal of Psychology* 41 (2002): 423.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 426.

to have experienced “something like scales” peeling off from his eyes, and he changed his perspectives and beliefs about Christianity after this encounter with Jesus. In Paul’s language, found in 2 Corinthians 5, he became a “new creation.”¹⁰⁹ From a CBT point of view, significant reframing happened after Jesus challenged Paul’s core belief through a therapeutic confrontation. However, it was not a simple cognitive behavioral shift but also a profound existential, theological, and spiritual shift that energized his passion and redirected his life’s path. Motivated through this confrontation and a constantly dialogical spiritual life that involved engaging spiritual communities and his own spiritual struggles, Paul matured into a public theologian who utilized his own inner transformation as a stepping-stone for the transformation of many different communities.

I draw my pastoral theology of engaging CBT as a pastoral guidance practice from my reflection on this Pauline passage. Seward Hiltner names “a guiding pastoral practice” as one of three aspects of shepherding: “healing, sustaining, and guiding.”¹¹⁰ To him, *shepherding* means the operations of a pastor and church in “the quest for the good of the person or persons involved ..., without thought of the larger good of larger groups or institutions.”¹¹¹ Hiltner understands a guiding practice to be “eductive” in that, without coercing care-seekers who are relying on external resources, pastors focus on the inner resources of the persons seeking pastoral care.¹¹² Hiltner does not disregard the effectiveness of external factors, such as pastors’ “words, feelings, convictions, knowledge and information, concern, and skill,” but all of these factors work as guiding

¹⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

¹¹⁰ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), 64.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64, 68.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 154.

aspects only when they evoke the inner sources of the pastoral care-seeker.¹¹³

Hiltner's understanding of pastoral care thus values the pastor as a powerful agent, who resembles the pastoral presence typically encountered by Korean immigrants in their churches. In considering guidance a pastoral practice that utilizes CBT, however, I see the agency of the care-seeker playing a much bigger role, which may warrant a slight revision of Hiltner's understanding of pastoral guidance. When caring for Korean immigrant elderly persons, pastoral caregivers are often engaged in a complicated power dynamic in which the pastoral caregiver is younger than the elderly care-seekers. In this relational context, the pastoral caregiver's guidance is more like that of a travel guide who sometimes needs to point out facts and landmarks, yet needs to allow the travelers to experience and process their own experiences without interpreting their experiences for them. However, just as when something is blocking the view, guides ask, encourage, and point out obstacles to provide a better view to travelers, so can caregivers help the elderly see their lives in more healthful ways. I especially value the image of pilgrimage for the inner journeys that occur through pastoral care encounters, as I see the function of the pastoral caregiver as recognizing and beholding sacred experiences as landmarks for care seekers' life journeys. In the Pauline passages, Paul's pastoral presence in different churches and through his pastoral letters may exemplify such guidance: he points to newly found realities, yet he also challenges assumptions that cause churches to get stuck instead of progressing in their journeys.

However, such pastoral guidance should not be limited to the individual's experience of the sacred: pastoral guidance needs to expand into communities and the

¹¹³ Ibid., 153.

contexts of communities. Hiltner's understanding of pastoral care as shepherding is limiting precisely in this respect. As John Patton points out, the pastoral theological paradigm has shifted during recent decades from the clinical to the communal-contextual paradigm.¹¹⁴ To continue to use Paul's example from the Bible, it is immediately recognizable that even during the first century, Paul dealt with the complex intercultural and societal contexts of his time and strove to address the public sphere of the time by actively engaging communities and moving beyond borders. His inner changes motivated him to move toward different communities and eventually toward Rome to engage the political structure. The communal contexts of elderly Korean American Christians are especially important in this practical theological reflection, as these contexts are both the contexts in which despair-inducing core beliefs are formed and the contexts of resilience that sustain their lives. Thus, these contexts are the loci of both pain and agency and have complex layers that can be difficult to uncover; pastoral guidance thus involves empowering care-seekers by aiding such uncovering of layers, which will lead to rediscovering resilience underneath. Here the CBT reframing process will function as a valuable pastoral tool.

To enhance the application of CBT to communities, I utilize Sharon G. Thornton's perspective on guiding pastoral practice because she points out social aspects that shape both the inner resources of pastoral care-seekers and pastoral practice as guidance. In *Broken Yet Beloved: A Pastoral Theology of the Cross*, Thornton sees a guiding pastoral

¹¹⁴ John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 4.

practice as “empowering people to accept reality and transform it.”¹¹⁵ For her, a guiding pastoral practice as empowerment involves education and discipline to help those who are suffering to develop critical thinking that enables them to understand and resist “the internalized norms, stereotypes, values, and experiences of the dominant culture” through producing “an alternative reading of reality.”¹¹⁶ She contends that thinking, as well as praying and acting, is an essential ingredient for a holistic guiding practice that aims to convert ways of seeing reality and reality itself.¹¹⁷ She also emphasizes her concern for ensuring that empowerment becomes a communal practice rather than a mode or function of pastoral care.¹¹⁸ In this vein, I will propose in my conclusion a guiding communal pastoral practice for pastoral caregivers and Christian communities to help elderly Korean American Christians understand their despair theologically, to deconstruct core beliefs formed by acculturation and its stresses and internalized ageism and racism, and to value their lived experiences as elderly Korean immigrants.

D. Audience

The academic community of pastoral and practical theologians is my primary intended audience. As described in this chapter, the issues of Korean American elderly immigrants are a relatively unexplored area in this academic community and need more attention. I intend to present the findings of this dissertation to Korean and Korean American pastoral and practical theologians to stimulate them to reflect theologically on

¹¹⁵ Sharon G. Thornton, *Broken Yet Beloved: A Pastoral Theology of the Cross* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 149.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150-59.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

the issues of Korean American elderly immigrants and to create appropriate pastoral practices for elderly people.

A secondary audience is Korean American pastors. Korean American elderly Christians are a growing population in Korean American churches, and Korean American pastors need social, psychological, theological, and existential understandings of this population to serve them effectively. In addition, most Korean American church leaders are elderly. Thus, it is essential for Korean American pastors to understand mental health and the theology of despair in order to help elderly lay leaders exert their leadership in Korean American churches.

E. Scope and Limitations

This study begins by describing the experiences of elderly Korean American Christians as shared through qualitative research interviews. The research design of the descriptive task portion of this study immediately limited the scope of the research sample: the lived experiences explored in this study are limited to Protestant Korean American elderly immigrants in Southern California. While the findings of this study can be generalized to other cultural, religious, and ethnic groups, the interpretations herein will rise from these particularly located experiences. The interview schedule also limited the scope of the questions to be explored: while the interview questions explored the immigration histories of the participants, this aspect of the interview was designed to explore the context of each individual's personal history rather than to document their experiences of immigration. The focus of the study was on the participants' negative and positive self-conceptions in the particularity of their contexts. While the interviews were designed in a way that allowed access to their stories of resilience as well as frustrations

with their aging processes, the interview itself was not a therapeutic intervention, in spite of the possibility that an interviewee's self-conception might shift in the midst of the interview.

The scope of my multidisciplinary reflection is limited to themes related to acculturation and ageism. Social scientific theories and research that address these themes will be engaged as interpretive dialogical partners to further understand the experiences of the interviewees. The theological task will mostly concentrate on dialogue with the theology of Kierkegaard, with additional dialogue with the works of pastoral theologian Andrew Lester. Thus, the theological scope of this reflection will be limited to dialogue with these two theologians.

F. Originality and Contributions

My research will contribute to the practical and pastoral theology field by providing the field with an understanding of and interventions for the theological and existential issues caused by the despair of Korean American elderly immigrants. This is an unexplored area for both Korean American elderly immigrants and other elderly ethnic groups in the United States, and this research will provide new understandings, theological background, and therapeutic approaches for these issues.

Also, in the field of practical and pastoral theology, Kierkegaard's theology has been rarely engaged as a dialogical partner. While the lived experiences of depressed Christians are often an important subject of pastoral theology, the existential implications of the concept of despair and its nuances have not been explored. Kierkegaard's concept of despair can provide a non-pathological understanding of this aspect of the experience of aging that has constructive pastoral implications. By engaging in a practical theological dialogue with Kierkegaard's work, this study contributes a fresh perspective

to the literature of pastoral theology.

G. Outline of the Chapters

This dissertation constructs a practical theology of despair in the context of the experiences of elderly Korean American Christian immigrants in the U.S. This chapter has introduced the topic and outlined this project's approach and scope. Chapter 2, "Research Design," describes the methods, the goal, the research partners, the settings, the general procedures, human subject considerations, and the strengths and limitations of this research. Chapter 3, "Research Findings," provides narratives from and analysis of interviews with six elderly Korean American Christian immigrants in Southern California. Chapter 4, "Discussion of the Research Findings," will connect the collected data and my interpretations with Kierkegaard's theology, Cognitive Behavior Theory, and other disciplines concerned with immigration, aging, and Korean American churches. Chapter 5, "Conclusions and Suggestions for Pastoral Care with Korean American Elderly Christians" offers a summary of this dissertation and suggestions for my research partners, Korean American pastors, and myself as a middle-aged Korean pastoral theologian. I will also suggest future research directions for further development of care for elderly Korean American Christians and possibly for other ethnic groups.

Chapter II

Research Design

In this chapter, I describe the methods, the goal, the research partners, the settings, the general procedures, human subject considerations, and the strengths and limitations of this research study. Regarding the methods, I used interviews within the framework of a qualitative research methodology. The goal of this research is to understand the experiences of despair of Korean American elderly Christians in order to provide new understandings of their experiences as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians for practical theologians and Korean American pastors. Related to the research partners, I will briefly describe my recruiting method and their demographic information. Brief information about the interview locations and the duration of the interviews will be provided to describe the settings. For the general procedures, I briefly explain how I recorded and transcribed the interviews and analyzed the collected data. Next, I explain how I protected the participants' private information to cover human subject considerations. Lastly, I describe the strengths and limitations of this study.

A. Qualitative Research Interview Study

I used interviews as my qualitative research method to shed light on the experiences of despair of six Korean American elderly Christian immigrants from their own points of view. The general goal of qualitative research is “to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences.”¹¹⁹ As Sharan B. Merriam asserts, in order to fulfill this goal “when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people

¹¹⁹ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, fourth ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 24.

interpret the world around them” and “when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate,” interviewing is often the primary or only data collection mode.¹²⁰ Collected data from interviews is analyzed “to unfold the meaning of [research participants’] experiences” and “to uncover their lived world” from their own viewpoints.¹²¹ Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale define the qualitative research interview as “literally an inter-view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest.”¹²² According to this definition, research partners are not just respondents to questions asked by researchers, but active authors who construct their own narratives about their lived worlds in personal interactions with researchers. From the interchanges of views between researchers and research partners in their cooperative interactions, new knowledge is constructed.¹²³

The qualitative research interviews done for this dissertation were semi-constructed and in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. I chose this interview method because it allowed me to be flexible in asking questions and not constrained by my own interview plan. This approach gave my research partners more space to practice their own agency in describing their experiences within their life contexts and more freedom to “define the world in unique ways” when I responded flexibly to their emerging and new views as they described their experiences of despair.¹²⁴ However, as Brinkmann and Kvale point out, because of the lack of a fully structured format to the interviews,

¹²⁰ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), 88.

¹²¹ Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research interviewing*, third ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Ppplication, Inc., 2015), 3.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁴ Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 90.

qualitative researchers frequently have to make instant decisions which are appropriate to individual interview situations and transitions, so they should be equipped with sufficient knowledge about their own interview topics and be familiar with various methodological options.¹²⁵

Even though qualitative research interviews offer flexibility in conducting interviews to researchers and agency to research partners, this research method raises ethical issues because qualitative research interviews are “specific professional conversation[s], which typically involve a clear power asymmetry” between researchers and research partners.¹²⁶ Researchers usually take the initiative because they determine the interview topics, design the interview questions, and analyze the collected data. However, Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland argue that the power imbalance between researchers and research partners is not unilateral and “the minimal structure of an in-depth qualitative interview in particular invites and enables multifaceted power shifts” between researchers and research partners across the course of an interview.¹²⁷

While I did not sense conflict due to power shifts during my research interviews, this issue was an important factor in one interview in which the participant kept digressing from my interview questions. I had to lead the interviewee to focus on the interview questions rather than her own agenda, but I found this was not an easy task because the research partner is much older than I, and I had to express my respect toward her. I also conducted interviews as a person in the roles of pastor and Ph.D. student, and

¹²⁵ Brinkmann and Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research interviewing*, 19.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹²⁷ Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland, *What is Qualitative Interviewing?* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 78.

my research partners seemed to respect me based on their own religious and Confucian cultural backgrounds.

B. Goal

The goal of this qualitative research interview study is to explore the experiences of despair of Korean American elderly Christians who are sixty-five years old and older from their own viewpoints. The study specifically focuses on the relationships between their despair and their social location as Korean American elderly immigrant Christians. It pays attention to their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual environments which negatively influence maintaining hope, possibility, meaning, agency, and ego-integrity. This research reflects the findings of this qualitative inquiry using the frame of practical theological reflection to provide elderly Christians and pastors of Korean American Protestant churches with psychological, theological, and social understandings for effective ministry with this population.

This research also pays attention to Korean American elderly Christians' resilience. Through interviews and analysis of them, I explore how they maintain hope, possibility, meaning, agency, and ego-integrity in the midst of their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual environments. For this exploration, I pay attention to how they have overcome various challenges since they immigrated to the U.S.

Another goal is to understand how Korean American elderly Christians describe their despair, the unique characteristics of their despair, and the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual factors that cause them to experience despair. Providing this description to Korean American pastors promotes pastoral theological reflection and could improve services for Korean American elderly Christians and encourage pastors

who serve Korean American Protestant churches to develop effective ministries for this population.

C. Research Partners

I recruited six research partners who live in Southern California. I chose research participants who were sixty-five years old or older because the usual retirement age in the U.S. is 65. Another requirement was that participants had to have lived in the U.S. longer than 10 years. This was based on my own presupposition that the longer they have been in the U.S. the more they would have to share about the lives as immigrants. Figure 1 provides brief demographic information on the research participants.

Figure 1. Demographic Information on the Research Participants

Research Participants	Minjung	Chulsoo	Minsoo	Jinsook	Soojin	Mija
Gender	F	M	M	F	F	F
Age	77	84	78	78	79	76
Immigration Duration (Years)	44	14	43	40	57	27
Marital Status	Widow	Widower	Married	Widow	Married	Married
Denomination	Christ Reformed Church	Korean Methodist	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Presbyterian
Education	Unknown	College	College	Unknown	College	College

To recruit participants, I called two Korean pastors and explained the goal of my research project and my proposed criteria for choosing research partners. One of them is the senior pastor of a medium-sized Korean American Presbyterian church and introduced my research project to elderly church members and asked them to volunteer for the project. He also permitted me to introduce myself to his elderly church members at their weekly meeting. I explained my research project to them and two elderly church

members volunteered for the qualitative research interviews. After having lunch at the church right after the meeting, I conducted one-hour interviews with each of the volunteers in a small room in the church. The other pastor is the junior pastor of a big Korean American Presbyterian church and is in charge of a weekly meeting for elderly church members. With his permission, I introduced my research project to the elderly church members and two of them responded to my request for volunteers. One elderly member made an appointment with me right after the meeting. The other elderly member received my telephone number, and she called me ten days after the meeting to set up an interview. One research participant was recruited with the help of a pastor's wife who is a friend of my wife. The friend of my wife explained my research project to some of the elderly members of her church and one member volunteered for an interview. She gave me the telephone number of the elderly church member and I called him to set up an interview. The last research participant was a former member of my church and she moved to an apartment for elderly people in L.A. after her husband passed away. I called her and explained my research project and she volunteered to participate.

D. Setting

When I set up research interviews with the six research partners, interviews were held at mutually agreed upon places. I asked where the best places were for them and put priority on their preferences. The two research partners from the middle-sized church above had interviews in a small room of the church because it was the last day of the meeting and the two volunteers wanted to have interviews right after having lunch at the church. Thus, after lunch, I conducted two one-hour interviews with the two research participants in the small room. Three research participants wanted to participate in

research interviews in their homes. One research participant wanted to participate in an interview away from his house, and I conducted an interview in a small room in the Claremont School of Theology library. Regarding the duration of the interviews, the shortest interview was fifty minutes and the longest interview was one hour and forty-three minutes. Husbands of two research partners observed the interviews: one stayed in the interview room from the beginning to the end of the interview, and the other joined the interview at the end. The interviews were not interrupted by their presence because they kept silent during the interviews.

E. General Procedures

Before the interviews began, I provided the participants with informed consent forms approved by the Claremont School of Theology IRB committee and explained to them the contents of the form. After research participants signed the informed consent forms, I started recording the interviews using the audio recording software on my cellphone, and the recorded files were transferred to my laptop and locked with passwords. During the interviews, I used the following 9 questions as a possible interview guideline, which are also found in Appendix 2, but my questions were revised in response to the stories told by the research participants. All interviews were conducted in Korean and, for confidentiality, pseudonyms for research partners, churches, and other important people in their narratives are used and research partners' detailed information is not revealed.

1. Tell me about your motivations and the circumstances that led you to immigrate to the United States of America.
2. How was your overall experience settling in the U.S.? What were the biggest adjustments compared to your life in Korea?
3. What makes you feel good about yourself?

4. What makes you feel bad about yourself?
5. What do you experience as the positive aspects of aging?
6. What do you experience as the negative aspects of aging?
7. What makes you feel your life is meaningful?
8. What kinds of comments have you heard from your friends, relatives, and neighbors who are older than 65 about their own aging processes?
9. What kinds of comments do you get from young people about being old?

After finishing each interview, I transcribed the recorded audio files in order to analyze the written data. For data analysis, I used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is, according to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) with data.”¹²⁸ Braun and Clarke argue that “thematic analysis does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches, ... it can offer a more accessible form of analysis.”¹²⁹ Another benefit of thematic analysis is that its theoretical flexibility enables researchers to approach “a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data.”¹³⁰

For the first step of my data analysis process, I read the transcripts several times in order to familiarize myself with them. After that, I generated an initial list of significant words, expressions, and sentences that shed light on the experiences of despair of Korean American elderly Christians. Next, I read the significant parts of the transcripts several times and produced initial codes from the data. After this open coding, I analyzed the codes and grouped them into similar categories in order to find themes among the codes

¹²⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2006): 79.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 81.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 78.

based on my definition of despair.

However, the initial coding did not fully reflect the experiences of despair of my research participants, and, following my academic advisors' recommendation, I revised my definition of despair and engaged in recoding. After finishing the recoding, I discovered more detailed and nuanced data from the written transcripts. During my recoding process, I found that using tables was a very helpful way of combining different codes into a main theme. After reviewing the themes, I defined and named the thematic categories.

F. Human Subject Considerations

Before I conducted my interviews with my research partners, I reviewed the content of the informed consent form with them. Reviewing the form, I gave them clear information about confidentiality and received their permission to record each interview. The informed consent form included an introduction of me as a researcher and the contact information for me and my academic advisor. The purpose of my research was introduced, presenting my goal to learn about the experiences of despair of Korean American elderly Christians, the contextual factors contributing to their despair, and the expected benefits of my research for pastoral theology and practices.

The form clearly indicated that their participation in my research interviews was voluntary, and they had the right to refuse or withdraw from the interview without any penalty if they did not feel comfortable during the interview. For confidentiality, I explained that the recorded and written data would be stored on my laptop and locked with passwords, and any information about them would be kept private. I also clearly explained that the recorded and written data would be deleted after I complete my

dissertation, and I promised that their information in my published dissertation or in other published writings in the future would be protected by pseudonyms. I informed them that even though there were no known risks associated with the qualitative research, there might be potential risks involved in exploring their negative experiences and related emotions.

G. Strengths and Limitations of this Study

A strength of my research is that the experiences of despair of my research partners are described from their own viewpoints. The personal detail of the descriptions makes the collected data specific and connected to the real lives of the population and provides more realistic viewpoints about their experiences to practical theologians and Korean American pastors. In addition, their unexpressed voices in their churches and communities will be shared in my research, and this may help practical theologians and Korean American pastors to understand their experiences of despair psychologically, sociologically, and theologically in order to improve their theologies and church ministries.

A limitation of this study is that my six research participants do not fully represent the population of Korean American elderly immigrant Christians in Southern California. Based on my observations, my research partners were healthier, financially more stable, and had more advanced educational levels than the average Korean elderly immigrant, so their experiences of despair might be different from other Korean American immigrant Christians. Regarding their denominational backgrounds, four of them belonged to Presbyterian churches, and this denominational concentration might produce limited data. If I had conducted interviews with research partners who had more issues related to

health, finances, and legal status and who belonged to different denominations, the collected data might be different. Even though my research partners' experiences of despair are useful windows to understanding the experiences of despair of this population, these experiences do not cover all the experiences of people in this demographic.

My research includes only one research participant who immigrated to the U.S. as an elderly person, so my research does not entail enough data about the experiences of those who immigrate to the U.S. in old age. Chronological age is an important factor in acculturation and the experiences of despair, and experiences of despair might be different according to the age at the moment of immigration. Even though I did not intend to recruit research partners who had spent long periods in the U.S., their average residency duration in the U.S. was thirty-five years, and my research naturally focused on the experiences of those who had long immigration experiences. Nevertheless, my findings provide a significant voice for this understudied population.

Chapter III

Research Findings

This chapter is a description of the research findings from my qualitative research interviews. Ten main themes emerged: Lack of Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future; Maintaining Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future; Failure to Synthesize Human Possibility and Finitude; Success in Synthesizing Human Possibility and Finitude; Lack of Meaning; Maintaining Meaning; Lack of Agency; Practicing Agency; Failure to Accept Life as It Is; and Acceptance of Life as It Is. In order to link these themes to my operational definition of despair proposed in the introduction, I repeat the definition here.

Despair is a human experience which is characterized by a lack of hope for one's self, the world, and one's future. Despair arises from a failure to synthesize human possibility and finitude, a lack of meaning and the agency of control, and a failure to accept one's life as it is, resulting in a lack of ego integrity.

The first and second themes, Lack of Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future and Maintaining Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future, are linked to the first factor of despair in my definition. This factor, "a lack of hope for one's self, the world, and one's future," mainly comes from Lester's definition of despair and Clinical Behavior Theory's definition of negative cognition. Lester emphasizes that despair is basically and fundamentally connected to negative perceptions about and lack of meaning for the future. However, the hope described by research partners includes hope for the present as well as the future. According to CBT, people with mental problems tend to consider themselves, the world, and the future in a negative manner. The common theme between Lester and CBT reflects one of the basic elements of despair, lack of hope.

The third and fourth themes, Failure to Synthesize Human Possibility and Finitude and Success in Synthesizing Human Possibility and Finitude, are associated with the second element of despair in my definition. This factor, “a failure to synthesize human possibility and finitude,” reflects Kierkegaard’s concept of despair. To Kierkegaard, a person despairs when he/she cannot engage in a process of both seeking possibility in him-/herself and realizing his/her limitations. In my data analysis, one research participant failed to seek her human potential because of limitations caused by health problems and relationships. Conversely, some of the research participants were fulfilling their human possibilities through using their own talents, spiritual practices, and physical exercise.

The fifth and sixth themes, Lack of Meaning and Maintaining Meaning, are connected to the third element of despair, “a lack of meaning,” in my definition. According to Lester, despair is a result of losing meaning for the future. However, my data analysis suggests that the meanings described by research participants are related to both the future and, more closely, to the present, and, moreover, hope for the future increases meaning for the present.

The seventh and eighth themes, Lack of Agency and Practicing Agency, reflect my own interest in elderly people and their despair. Lack of Agency is the only theme all my research participants reported that, for physical, social, and cultural reasons, they struggled with. Their lack of agency is mainly caused by acculturation issues and social oppressions, such as limited English, lack of cultural knowledge, racism, and ageism.

The last two themes, Failure to Accept Life as It Is and Acceptance of Life as It Is, come from Erikson’s definition of despair. For him, ego integrity means accepting life as

it is and defending one's dignity against all past failures and regrets about the past, and lack of ego integrity is despair. Regretting the past was one of the most difficult experiences for some of the research participants, and, even though they accepted their lives as they were, some of them accepted their lives in a reluctant manner.

According to my data analysis, Korean American churches and the participants' children were both primary causes of participants' despair and resources for hope and meaning. Spirituality is an important resource for meaning-making and hope, but when spiritual development is hindered by physical and other issues, spirituality becomes a cause of despair. Aging is a cause of despair, but it also becomes a resource for wisdom and spirituality.

A. Lack of Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future

The first main theme, lack of hope, is caused by three factors: issues in Korean American churches, lack of hope for the future due to aging, and loss of human relationships. Among these three factors, issues in Korean American churches most negatively affected the research partners' lack of hope for themselves, the world, and the future.

1. Issues in Korean American Churches

Four research participants reported their disappointment with Korean American church members and their pastors, and their negative experiences resulted in a lack of hope for their lives. Because they are retired and have limited English proficiency, Korean American elderly Christians rely mainly on their churches for their social and spiritual well-being. Thus, they are more greatly influenced by negative experiences in their churches than other generations of Korean Americans. In the following excerpt from

Soojin's interview, she shares the impact of some church dynamics on her family.

Soojin: When I was 51, my husband and I became Christians. We went to an American church, but we felt it was not good enough. However, we did not want to attend Korean churches. This was because elders in the churches were not good Christian models. My husband had a successful job in America. They openly left my husband out in the cold. Because we wanted to attend a Korean church, we attended one for several months. But we moved to Grace Community Church after several months, and then we moved to this church after retirement. Because we were attending this church, we did not attend a church together with our children for 10 years. The senior pastor is very calm, and because he has lived in America for a long time, he understands the church members well. But we did not enjoy this church for a while because of conflicts with an elder of the church in the past. Korean churches tend to easily give elder titles to people who are somewhat old. It is obvious how harmful it is if elders and deaconesses are not given their roles because of their faith. I noticed the negative results in my family.

Researcher: What did you find in your family?

Soojin: My children do not go to a church.

Researcher: You mean they were disappointed and hurt from inappropriate experiences in Korean American churches?

Soojin: Yes, even though pastors gave them the titles of elder and deaconess out of good intentions, pastors should give the titles only to people who are qualified for the roles. If they get the title because of their age without individual qualifications, it harms non-Christians around the church. I really want to tell you this.

As Soojin explained, her husband and she were disappointed with Korean American churches because they experienced church members' jealousy of the career success of her husband and were disappointed with elders' inappropriate behaviors. Her children also received negative impressions of Korean American churches and renounced their Christian faith. Soojin decries the system within Korean American churches in which ineligible Christians receive church titles, and she asserts that Korean American pastors should be careful when selecting elders and deacons/nesses in order to prevent shameful issues in their churches.

Chulsoo likewise commented on his impression of Korean American churches and their issues:

Most Korean pastors in America say that ministry in Korean American churches is hard. Why is this so? I hear that ministry is hard because the minds of Korean immigrants are not spiritual, and they make a lot of trouble in their churches because they live unspiritual Christian lives. Because of this, they experience conflict, and pastors have difficult church ministries. I do not have direct ministry experiences in Korean American churches, but if I have conversations with Korean American church members, I hear they get titles, such as “elder” and “deaconess,” after attending a church, even though they do not have sincere Christian faiths. Their levels of faith are very low if I compare them with Korean church members in Korea. I have the impression that people who do not have strong faith get titles in the church.... When Korean church members in Korea get titles in the church, they usually know the basics of Christian faith, but in the case of Korean immigrants, they just come to church because they feel lonely. They get titles just because they attend church, and, as a result, their faith is groundless. They get titles sooner than Korean church members in Korea because most Korean immigrant churches are small and these churches misuse titles in order to keep their church members in the churches. I see Korean immigrant Christians attending their churches without the groundwork of Christian faith, and I desperately feel that the ministry in Korean immigrant churches is very hard.

Chulsoo mentioned that his own son has been a pastor in several Korean American churches, and he has experienced troubles in these churches even though he was very successful before the troubles. According to Chulsoo, his son is now in church ministry in Korea.

When my son was successful, I felt good because he was receiving praise from his church members. However, after problems arose, I felt the church members changed abruptly because they did not live consistently with the basics of Christian faith. People who practice spiritual disciplines tend to solve issues in spiritual ways, but Korean immigrant Christians tend to try to solve issues in emotional ways. This made problems more complex, and watching this made me feel burdened.

Based on Chulsoo’s experiences and perspectives of Korean American Christians, he concluded that Korean American churches tend to have more issues than Korean churches in Korea because Korean American church members are not disciplined in their Christian faith, and they tend to approach church issues from non-spiritual perspectives.

Mija described disappointment with pastors her family members had experienced:

After we came here, my first son was baptized in Faith Church and my second son was baptized in a small church. But I am sorry to say this in front of you, Pastor. There are a lot of pastors who are not respected.... My two sons are very negative about attending church because they have had too many negative experiences in Korean churches here.

Mija did not give concrete examples of the negative experiences, but they have affected her two sons in an off-putting manner, and it is painful for her to watch them refuse to attend church.

Minsoo shared his experiences with a Korean American church in detail:

Minsoo: When I came to America, I attended a Korean church, Hope Presbyterian Church. But the church divided in two because the senior pastor and one elder had conflicts. The senior pastor started a new church, and one day after I started attending the new church I had a vision while I was sleeping. I saw God in the vision. God said to me that I should stop the fighting.... make them united. But I eventually left the church because my effort was useless, even though I tried to persuade the elder and the pastor.... After that, I left the Christian faith.... In the 1970s, I bought a nice house in the Valley area. In current values, this house might be worth \$3,000,000. This is a 7-room house and I employed two housemaids. However, many things came into my mind after living in this big house. I felt I should attend church and made a decision. I went to a Korean church. Do not misunderstand, Pastor. I am not insulting you.... I found that my two workers were members of the church. They asked me to lend my van for a church field trip, and I let them use a delivery car. I also sent 10 boxes of Coke to the church. I saw the senior pastor first when I attended a Sunday worship service. I found my name in the bulletin the next Sunday, and the church appointed me as the chairperson of the building committee even though I had just attended the church twice.... I wondered what kind of church this was. I did not know the church members and had only seen the senior pastor one week before. How could I have been appointed to that position?

Researcher: You were hurt by the negative aspects of Korean immigrant churches in the past?

Minsoo: Yes, I was. I stopped attending church. When my daughter passed away, I met Pastor Na and Pastor Oh. They were likeable. I felt I wanted to join this kind of church and have attended it every Sunday for more than two years....

Researcher: You first got a positive impression of the Korean immigrant church when the pastors did something for you during the funeral of your daughter.

Minsoo: Yes, you are right. I confess this honestly.... When I was the chairperson of a Korean police force, I experienced a lot of cases related to Korean immigrant churches. A deaconess fled with the money of church members, and I dealt with a

lot of cases of accusations. I was distressed at that time. Why were churches like this? Listen to me. There was one reason for this. First, people attended churches in order to get jobs. Listen to me carefully. This is a real story. Second, they need to contact church members to sell property. Third, if I am an insurance salesman, particularly a life insurance salesman, I get a commission of one year's worth of insurance money for every customer I have.... The early Korean immigrant church consisted of these people who wanted to make friends in the church and to make themselves known to the members to make money. At that time, they did not come to the church out of faith. Some people went to church because they felt lonely, not because they wanted to believe in God.... Then they wanted to get jobs. They wanted to get a ride to the DMV. I know there were some sincere Christians. Yes, there were. These people tried to help others out of pure minds. But there were a lot of people who sought their own benefits in the early Korean immigrant churches.... Many victims were in the churches, and actually, this was not a religion, but a so-called fraudulent group.

Minsoo told another story about his own experiences as a sheriff. According to him, around 1991 or 1993, there was a murder by a Korean evangelist.

This happened in Hallelujah Presbyterian Church. There was an unmarried deaconess in the church. This is a real story. The case perhaps happened in 1991 or 1993. One of the junior pastors of the church tried to introduce her to a Korean guy in Korea.... She went to Korea and met the guy because the pastor begged her to do this, and the guy was actually a friend of the junior pastor. The Korean guy was an evangelist and she seemed to like him. They decided to marry and their parents met each other. After they married, the wife came to America first and found out she was pregnant. So the husband came to America later and lived with his wife in her house.... The evangelist brought a bag with him from Korea and did not want to show it to his wife.... They had a new baby. Three months after the birth of the baby, ... she found her baby dead under a blanket after she returned from work.... A sheriff's office got an emergency call and called me to investigate this case.... I found finger marks on the dead body of the baby.... I asked him [the husband] how the baby died and he answered that he killed the baby.... The evangelist told me that he killed the baby because he thought that it was better for the baby to go to God rather than to live here like this.... Later, he changed his remarks and denied that he killed the baby. He said he did not know anything about the death of his baby.... I checked his personal details through the Korean consulate and got a document saying that he had been in hospitals because of his mental problems. Moreover, he had been married before and his ex-wife had fled from him because of his mental problems. We confiscated his bag and found \$20,000, a Bible, and, sorry about this, Pastor, a note that included an awkward story that he wanted to do something special using the power of God. The story was about how he could get something with the power of God, even though he was incapable of getting it on his own. When I asked him whether he killed the baby, he denied it again.... There was one way I could have helped him. This was to prove he had mental problems,

but he refused to let me do this.... There was one reason for this. He said even though he served his sentence in a prison, he could still be a minister, but he could not keep doing church ministry if he got a diagnosis that he had mental problems.

As Minsoo noted, his experiences with Korean American churches and the case of the evangelist caused him to be disappointed, to lose hope for the churches, and to stop going to church. Some church members in his first story went to church not for spiritual and religious reasons but with the goal of making money, and this caused problems in the Korean American churches they attended. In the latter story, Minsoo criticized a junior pastor for pressuring one of his church members to meet and date a person with mental illness. Minsoo's story of being appointed the chairperson of a congregation's building committee even though he was a totally new member illustrates a common problem in Korean immigrant churches and his disappointment and alienation.

These research participants' negative experiences in their churches not only diminished their hope for their own lives but also limited their hope for their children. Thus, this issue produced the additional suffering of watching their children struggling with their identities as Christians and Korean Americans. The participants' hopes for being nurtured with spiritual resources in their churches were damaged, and their negative experiences caused them to be more isolated from their spiritual resources.

2. Lack of Hope for the Future Due to Aging

Jinsook, Mija, and Chulsoo experienced lack of hope for the future. For example, Jinsook suffered strong nostalgia, and wished she could enjoy a peaceful time for a while in Korea, but she mentioned that she could not do that because she was too old and did not have friends who could join her.

Jinsook: My generation misses Korea. So I wish I could visit Korea and stay in a bed and breakfast for a month. I want to eat fresh Korean fish and vegetables and

to relax there. I just want to enjoy the rural life there. But I am too old and it is not easy to do this. I cannot go there by myself. I don't have any friends.

Mija also mentioned that because of her old age she did not have the opportunity to do new things:

Researcher: As an elderly person, what do you think about the youthfulness of younger people?

Mija: They have opportunities to do various things.

Researcher: How about you?

Mija: I do not have the chance anymore. I do not know when I will die.

In Chulsoo's story, his wife had a stroke in Korea, and he spent 15 years taking care of her before she died in America. He had felt hopeless watching his dying wife, and he had wanted her to die soon to be free from suffering.

Because my wife was suffering from her disease for a long time, I thought it might be better for her to die. I always wished that God would take her to Heaven soon.

Aging bodies, limited human relationships, and limited time prevented these participants from maintaining hope for the future. Jinsook could not deal with her homesickness. Mija could not dream about doing new things. Chulsoo could not expect more opportunities to live with his wife. Aging was an unavoidable boundary in which they were confined, and they had to give up positive stories about the future.

3. Loss of Human Relationships

Loss of human relationships was important to two research participants. This is crucial particularly for widows and widowers. Because Chulsoo lost his wife six years ago and also gradually lost his social relationships after his retirement, his social relationships were restricted mainly to several Korean American elderly people who played golf with him every day.

Researcher: You said the people who used to play golf with you every day moved to other places one by one and stayed there.

Chulsoo: Since I came to the U.S., they played golf with me for ten years.

Researcher: I guess they were wonderful friends to you and you had a lot of conversations with them. You shared life stories...

Chulsoo: They scattered.

Researcher: This means you cannot see them anymore and it is almost impossible for you to enjoy golf with them.

Chulsoo: I enjoy golf alone because I cannot spend time with them anymore.

Researcher: You said before that you enjoy golf even though you do not have friends who can play golf with you. How do you feel you cannot see them anymore and thus you cannot talk with them?

Chulsoo: They fell and disappeared like dead leaves fall one by one out of the trees during fall and winter. Life goes like that and I accept that.

Chulsoo's metaphor of the dead leaves reflects his lack of hope for the future. He cannot have interactions anymore with his friends with whom he has shared important parts of his life since he came to the U.S. Chulsoo implied their friendship was very meaningful and important to him because he lost his wife, and they were the closest friends with whom he had spent the longest time since immigrating to the U.S. His loss of human relationships had led him to accept life as it is, but, at the same time, they caused him to feel limited hope for the future.

Minjung also said that she has lost her friends. Minjung shared that she was hurt when she saw her friends suffer from health problems. She met them in her previous church in a rural area in California and moved to an apartment in L.A. after attending this church around 10 years. Her friends visited her after she moved to the apartment, but she could not get together with them anymore because of their health problems and the long distance between them. They only communicate with each other by phone now.

Minjung: After getting old, they started getting sick. They are almost the same

age as me. Exactly the same age, one year older, or one year younger. Hyosoon cannot come because of her thyroid problem. Soonok cannot come because of her business. Jisun cannot come because he moved back to Denver. They cannot visit me anymore as I expected.

Researcher: How do you feel about your close friends not being able to visit you anymore because of various reasons?

Minjung: My heart bleeds for them. I feel pain in my bones when I hear about their health problems. I always think about their love for me. As my friends, they showed me the Lord's love. I cried when I thought about their love because I really appreciated their kindness. I cried in silence out of appreciation.

Minjung seemed to identify with her friends' health problems, and her identification appeared to intensify because of the loss of face-to-face contact with them. Her lack of hope for the future was evident when she said, "as I expected." Now she believes she cannot see them anymore because of their health problems, and her hope for enjoying her life with her friends has been seriously limited.

B. Maintaining Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future

Even though some of the research partners suffered from lack of hope in some aspects of their lives, they still maintained hope in other aspects in the face of various challenges. Their important resources for maintaining hope are their children, their spiritualities, and Korean American churches.

1. Maintaining Hope for Children

Two research participants mentioned that they found hope through their children. In Korean culture, elderly parents tend to depend on their children for their happiness and meaning and to put more importance on their children's happiness than their own happiness. One way Korean parents define happiness is to watch their children being successful academically. In the same vein, Korean Christian parents strongly want to pass down their Christian faith to their children. Several research participants responded that,

even though their children had lost their Christian faith because of their negative experiences in their churches, they still maintained hope for their children's recovery of faith.

Mija went through a very difficult time because of her two sons. Her first son was not academically successful in school because he immigrated to the U.S. when he was a 12th grader. Her second son dropped out of school when he was a 9th grader primarily because he immigrated to the U.S. when he was an 8th grader and did not fulfill the school's academic requirements. Her two sons also stopped going to church after having negative experiences in Korean American churches. Her sons' academic failures and rejections of Christian faith were the hardest experiences in her life, but she still tried to maintain hope for her children.

Because of negative experiences in churches, they don't want to go to church. But I told them I believed someday God would lead them to God because they were baptized. They did not refute my thought when I said this. I am pretty sure they will have sound lives. My two sons will have healthy lives. I think my task will be completed with this.

Soojin shared that her two children had negative experiences with Korean Americans in general, and they had negative opinions about interacting with Korean Americans. But she maintained her hope that if they came to understand human beings, they would someday dismiss their negative ideas about Korean Americans.

Soojin: At that time, there were not many Koreans here. My children did not have positive relationships with Korean Americans. There are some negative aspects of Korean people and the Korean cultural background. My niece grew up here and told me she was scared by Koreans here. I asked her why. She said Koreans were too tough and focused only on their own interests. So she said it was scary to be with Koreans.

Researcher: As you said, your children got an overall negative impression of Korean culture, and it is not easy for them to make connections with Korean Americans.

Soojin: No.

Researcher: It is also not easy for them to go to Korean American churches. As a Korean American, how do you feel about that?

Soojin: Me?

Researcher: Yes, how do you feel about your children rejecting Koreans even though they are Koreans?

Soojin: I told them that there are good people and bad people among Americans, too; every culture has both good and bad aspects, and look at the positives of Korean culture. I said, "When you were young, you suffered from the negative aspects of the Korean culture, but you are now mature. You experienced the problems not because they were Koreans, but because they were human beings."

Researcher: These are not problems of Koreans or Americans, but caused by being human beings.

Soojin: Yes, I expect they will be free from their negative thoughts about Koreans when they will someday be saved as I pray to God... I think they can be free from their negative thoughts when they accept Christian faith and realize what human beings are.

These examples are typical in many Korean American Christian families. Drawing on their spiritualities, the research participants tried to maintain hope for their children's recovery of their Christian faith.

2. Maintaining Hope through Spirituality

The research participants' most important resource for maintaining hope is spirituality. My data indicates that my research participants developed their spiritualities in spite of loss of health, and spiritual development enables them to confront their declines in health and loss of agency. Two research participants responded that their spirituality is an important resource for maintaining hope for their lives.

Chulsoo affirmed that spirituality still grows even as people become older:

By the way, one thing, faith only gets better when we get older. I have seen people whose faith was not deep, but their faith gets much deeper after they become elderly. As I think about it, elderly people cannot do other things, but they can develop their faith. Everything in elderly people regresses, but it is faith that keeps moving forward. So I have hope and expect this.

Soojin shared that she was maintaining hope through the power of the Word of God in the face of physical and mental challenges:

Researcher: When you came to the U.S., the hardest problem was the language issue.

Soojin: Yes, the language issue and homesickness. I just sent mail to family members in Korea, and it is better to say that I just endured my homesickness.

Researcher: How about the issues now?

Soojin: Now?

Researcher: About your homesickness and language issues?

Soojin: I think the issues were solved somehow.

Researcher: Don't you have special problems now?

Soojin: No, I don't, because by faith I received spiritual perspectives through which I could look at the world and met wonderful Christian friends. I have difficulties because I am old. It's physically hard. My husband will be eighty-five next month. It's tough physically and mentally. It is only by the power of the Word of God that I am able to overcome my difficult situation.

3. Hope to See Family Members in Heaven

For Minsoo and Chulsoo, their hope that they would someday see their family members in heaven enabled them to maintain hope for the future. Minsoo mentioned that after his daughter passed away because of lung cancer, he experienced auditory hallucinations and saw the ghost of his daughter. However, he maintained hope that he would again see his daughter in heaven. Chulsoo also had strong hope that he would rejoin his wife in heaven, and this hope was an important spiritual resource for him in helping him maintain a positive perspective on his future and, at the same time, to live a meaningful life in the present. Thus, these two people's hope of joining family members in heaven was an important part of their spiritualities and enhanced their spiritual aspirations for seeking God more.

Minsoo: I used to say to myself, “Forget it. Forget it.” But, I couldn’t do that...

Researcher: A Korean proverb says that if children die, parents bury them in their hearts.

Minsoo: One of my granddaughters is now 38. She said to me, “Grandpa, Jane went to heaven first. If you had died first and Jane had waited to see you in heaven, it would have taken 40 years. But, Jane is already there. How much longer are you going to live here? You can live 10 more years and can see her after 10 years. Jane took a trip to heaven. You can see her there.”

Researcher: How did you feel when you heard that?

Minsoo: I was impressed by what she said to me. She is much younger than me and is just 38.

Researcher: Were you consoled by her?

Minsoo: She consoled me a lot.

Researcher: If so, you have hope to see Jane in the future even though you do not exactly know the time.

Minsoo: Yes, I do. If I see her, I will do everything that I didn’t do for her before [smiled].

Chulsoo shared that his hope to see his wife in heaven guided him to be more spiritual.

Chulsoo: I am pretty sure she went to God because she had faith. Because of my confidence, I used to say to myself, I will see her if I go there. I will see her. We will see each other.

Researcher: You are pretty sure about seeing her in heaven.

Chulsoo: Sure.

Researcher: You believe in the possibility of meeting your wife in heaven, but at the same time you are sad because you cannot see her now.

....

Chulsoo: I think God gave us hope for heaven, and this hope is the most important thing in the core of our Christian faith; we cannot exchange it with anything. Everybody dies. If we do not have hope for heaven, how can you live faithful lives? I focus on the hope, and so I try to live a faithful life following God’s will. If I didn’t have that hope, I would live a careless life.

4. Hope for One's Self, the World, and the Future Coming from Korean American Churches

Even though Korean American churches were an important cause of disappointment and lack of hope for four research participants, Minsoo described his church as providing resources for hope. After his daughter passed away, two pastors from a Korean American church led the funeral for her, and Minsoo was impressed by their courtesy and pastoral care. This positive experience changed his negative perceptions of Korean American churches, and he found meaning and hope from participating in church activities.

Researcher: You were hurt by negative aspects of the Korean immigrant church in the past?

Minsoo: Yes, I was. I stopped attending church. When my daughter passed away, I met Pastor Song and Pastor Lee. They were likeable. I felt I wanted to join this kind of church and have attended it every Sunday for more than two years....

Researcher: You first got positive impressions of the Korean immigrant church when the pastors did something for you during the funeral for your daughter.

Minsoo: Yes, you are right. I confess this honestly....

Researcher: Was this the first time you felt positively about Korean American churches?

Minsoo: Yes, this was the first time.

...

Minsoo: I feel peace when I am in the church. I say to myself, "Empty your mind." I used to say to my pastor, "God is with you. God is true. God is here." ... While I read the Bible, I think that I am a setting sun, but I will serve and rely on God for the last part of my life. I want to have a life without conflict and greed. In other words, I want to share what I have with others. That's my desire and hope.

As noted previously, Minsoo was seriously disappointed with Korean American churches before his daughter passed away, but after being cared for by pastors he changed his negative perspective on and attitude toward Korean American churches. Moreover, he

found new hope for himself and the future and a new goal of sharing what he has with others.

C. Failure to Synthesize Human Possibility and Finitude

As an immigrant, elderly woman and a Christian, Soojin suffered from a failure to synthesize her possibility of becoming spiritually more mature because she was limited by her physical condition and her responsibilities to care for her husband and other elderly church members. She wanted to move to another church she preferred where she felt she was better nurtured by the pastor's sermons, but she could not move because of her responsibilities. Moreover, she said that her life was so hard that she needed good sermons to sustain her spiritually.

Soojin: There is a church around here which I want to attend because the senior pastor of the church delivers good sermons. However, I cannot leave my church. I cannot go there because I serve other old members in my church and think I should help them. I will not move to another church for my own sake and should consider my senior pastor. I sometimes attended the church and felt I was filled with spiritual energy and my life became much easier during the week. In this neighborhood church, I received wisdom and God's word from the sermons of the senior pastor. The pastor is only 43 years old. One Friday, I attended the church even though I try to avoid driving at night because it is really hard for me to drive at night. I told myself, "I need to go." When I went there, I felt extremely happy. I felt I could do everything. So I wanted to move to this church, but I felt I would abandon other old members in my current church. I also felt my idea of moving to the other church was not a spiritual one. I am still praying about making a spiritual and wise decision.... I can survive only when I listen to good sermons. Because I am a human, I cannot survive with just listening to a good sermon one time.

Researcher: Do you think you need to regularly listen to good sermons?

Soojin: This is because I cannot overcome my difficulties with only my own strength. My life is very hard and I think I can deal with various issues if I listen to good sermons every week.

Researcher: You said you need to listen to good sermons for your survival. Is your life that difficult?

Soojin: Yes.

Researcher: Your life as an elderly person is hard...

Soojin: I think I accept my physical and emotional difficulties when I think, “This is life and I do not live alone,” if I feel I am not alone, and God always cares for me, and God gives me wisdom. Even though I receive good spiritual inspiration from reading the Bible, I am too tired and repeatedly start reading Genesis....

Researcher: You said you could overcome your difficulties only if you listen to good sermons. Can you tell me what difference you experience in your life when you listen to good sermons?

Soojin: I appreciate my life in spite of my physical and emotional difficulties. I accept my situation.

Researcher: Do you appreciate your physical and emotional difficulties?

Soojin: Because I am thankful for my life, I do not feel my life is too difficult and I have a happy life.

Researcher: When you listen to good sermons, you accept your life with gratitude.

Soojin: Yes.

Researcher: Your health declines and your emotional burden looks heavy because of your responsibility to care for others. You seem to gain spiritual energy that enables you to bear the heavy burdens only when you listen to good sermons.

Soojin’s heavy responsibilities and low physical energy have caused her to experience more spiritual thirst, but, at the same time, prevented her from meeting it. She tries to overcome her physical and psychological difficulties through spirituality and implied that spirituality is the only resource she has. In many cases, spirituality is the only resource elderly people have to help them deal with their issues, so assisting them in developing their spiritualities is important.

D. Synthesizing Human Possibility and Finitude

In the face of various challenges in their lives, such as limited English abilities, health problems, and limited opportunities for their spiritual development, all the research participants showed resilient power to synthesize possibility and finitude. The research partners synthesized their finitude as immigrants, Christians, and elderly people with their possibilities by using their own talents, becoming wiser, and doing their best to

maintain their health. This implies that while their lives are partially limited by the challenges previously noted, they are able to partially overcome their limitations by using their resources.

For example, Mija and Minjung shared their experiences of overcoming their limited English skills by using their own talents.

Mija: At my drive-through store, some people got out of their cars and chose what they wanted. Others ordered what they wanted in their cars. I still think I did one thing wonderfully. I memorized each customers' favorite items, such as tobacco and beer. So I gave them what they wanted before they ordered. My customers liked me a lot. They also appreciated my service because I was a woman and my service seemed to be better than the service they used to receive from men. I was successful and bought the property.

Minjung: I worked at a clothing store. Even though I did not study fashion, I was good at matching clothes. I sold more clothes than other workers. My customers even bought jewelry because I wonderfully matched it with clothing.

Both Mija and Minjung overcame their lack of English proficiency by using their own talents, and this was their way of surviving as immigrants.

Soojin, Mija, and Minjung noted that they became wiser and deeper in their thinking and in their relationships with God in spite of aging. Mija shared that she became more mature because she thought more deeply as a result of her declining physical health. Soojin observed that she is more reflective about her life in her old age and now has wisdom:

After I became old, I looked back on my past more and ... feel death is close to me. I feel time is more precious and appreciate my life more. I think about my past a lot and feel I should have done some things differently... Wisdom. I share what I have newly realized with people around me. I consider simpler ways of eating foods and preparing meals. I think more. I think more about my health. When I pray every morning and evening, I pray to God, "Please let me know if I am doing wrong." I sometimes feel God is helping me... In the past I lived without thinking ... nowadays I think.

Similarly, Minjung said that she had come to understand more about the world and life, and this gave her positive thoughts about aging:

I think positively about old age and I can now understand all the truth and principles of the world. When I was young, I was rebellious and always complained to my mom. Now I usually bury myself in one subject and think deeply about it. And then I list general and universal things about it and connect them to it. If the connection works, it's all right... Now I can see things in their true colors. The truth is very simple and universal.

Chulsoo communicated that he realized his life was still precious and was thankful to God for his daily life. He implied that he confronted his finitude of having limited time by adding new meaning to his daily life and enjoying even trivial matters, and he utilized his possibility by making his life meaningful in the presence of his finitude of being weak physically and having little time left to live:

I accept I am old. I made a resolution to enjoy my life as much as I can ... When I think about my own aging, appreciation for my life comes out of my heart. I am very thankful for my daily life. Daily life is so precious... My wish is to have a pleasant life.

Minsoo shared that he strives to maintain his health by exercising. He implied that in the face of the finitude of getting old, he tries to utilize the possibility of maintaining his health: "I just do my best to maintain my health. You can find a big hospital to go to ... there is a gym in the hospital. For two years I have gone there at 9:00 in the morning, and I exercise for 40 or 50 minutes three or four days a week."

The research participants partially overcame their English limitations, physical weaknesses, aging, and limited time by actively utilizing their talents, developing wisdom, finding meaning in their daily lives, and exercising. Even though their finitude was still present, their possibility of being successful in business, becoming wiser, finding meaning, and being healthy was open to them, and they synthesized finitude and

possibility. They were neither controlled by nor disregarded their finitude. They were neither caught up in a fantasy nor disregarded their possibility. They acknowledged their limitations, but at the same time they tried to find ways of overcoming these limitations.

E. Lack of Meaning

Lack of meaning in life is a difficult hardship for elderly people because they tend to look back on their lives and want to find meaning from all their memories and experiences. This theme is very important for Korean American elderly immigrants because they made serious sacrifices as immigrants for their children and their own survival. They want to find meaning in their lives in the U.S. The questions about why they are here and what they are doing here become more important when, as described previously, meaning depends on their children. If they fail to find meaning in supporting their children, anger and resentment are common responses. Even though this was not true of their own experiences, Chulsoo and Minsoo said many Korean American elderly immigrants suffer from lack of meaning because of their children. Because of financial issues and abandonment by their children, the Korean American elderly immigrants in Chulsoo's and Minsoo's stories felt the futility of life and suffered from anger and resentment toward their children.

Chulsoo: When I see my friends around me, I feel that the first generation of Koreans here seem to feel empty. They did their best to educate their children and to survive, but they feel empty because they are old and their children are not interested in their parents. The biggest problem is the financial issue. They just survive with the money they get from the government or with financial support from their children. But the support is not sufficient.

Researcher: The support is not enough...

Chulsoo: They are not satisfied with the support and live difficult lives even though they made great efforts for their children.

Researcher: Have you ever had conversations about this with them?

Chulsoo: Sure, there are many who have that issue.

Researcher: As you observe their lives, what do you think about their lives?

Chulsoo: I think I am a very happy person compared to them. I think their lives are really hard... They resent their children due to their financial issues.

Researcher: They resent their children.

Chulsoo: They made great efforts for their children, but they said it was useless.

Minsoo also mentioned that some of his Korean American friends suffer from similar issues.

You don't know this well yet. But the children of several of my friends asked their parents for money. One of my friends died one year ago in L.A. He made big money and lived in comfort, but his son used his father's money for business and kept failing. He sold his house to support his son because his wife told him that they were old, and she wanted to help their son and to enjoy their lives after selling their house. However, their son failed in business again. The mother had hidden money before, but her son took the money. My friend's sight deteriorated and he lived without a car, using the bus. He got more diseases, and finally died.

As described by Chulsoo and Minsoo, some Korean American elderly people feel anger and resentment due to lack of meaning because, in spite of supporting their children, their children do not appreciate them, do not support them financially, and are not successful. In Korean culture, expecting future financial support from their children, Korean parents tend to spend a lot of money on their children, and the elderly parents in Minsoo and Chulsoo's stories lost meaning because they suffered from the absence of financial and emotional support from their children.

F. Seeking Meaning

In spite of their elderly bodies, difficult lives as immigrants, and negative experiences in their churches, my research partners still seek and find meanings in their lives from the rewards they have received from their hard work in the U.S., their children, spirituality, wisdom, time, and family.

1. Seeking Meaning from the Rewards of Hard Work

Mija, Soojin, and Minsoo found meaning as immigrants from the rewards they received from their hard work. These rewards were one of the most important motivations for their immigration to the U.S. because these rewards were not guaranteed in Korea. Here are remarks from these three research participants:

Mija: I think if we work hard, this country acknowledges our hard work. If I do not deceive and file tax reports honestly, I receive benefits when I am old. Many people do not file tax reports and do not receive benefits when they are old. Even illegal people can receive tax IDs if they pay taxes.

Soojin: As time went by and I watched my husband's life at his work, even though racism is still here in this country, if you work hard, this country gives you an answer.

Minsoo: When I immigrated to the U.S., I thought I could have a party every day and good meals in this country, but I found Americans were more diligent and honest than any other people. You certainly receive rewards if you work hard... if you work hard, your life in this country is much better than in Korea. This is the difference.

2. Seeking Meaning through Children

One of the ways Minsoo and Jinsook found meaning in their lives as immigrants was by recognizing the opportunity their children had to get a better education in the U.S. and watching their children's success. Immigration to the U.S. in order for children to get a better education has been a social phenomenon in Korea, and this phenomenon depends on the cultural factor that Korean parents put priority on their children's success and happiness and on providing the best education for their children. Korean parents also tend to maintain closer and more attached relationships with their children than their American counterparts. Jinsook's motivation to immigrate was for a better education for her children. As described in the Lack of Meaning section, Jinsook shared that her children gave meaning to her life and were a resource with which she encouraged herself to have a

pleasant life. Chulsoo communicated that he immigrated to the U.S. after he retired from his church ministry at the age of seventy in order to live with his son, who was a local pastor of a Korean American church. Staying with his son's family gave meaning to his life as an immigrant and elderly person, and he enjoyed his son's initial success in ministry. His son is now the senior of pastor of a church in Korea and, when Chulsoo spent time in Korea, he enjoyed the time with his son's family.

I and my son get along with each other. Younger people usually do not want to get along with older people, but my son doesn't mind spending time with me. My daughter-in-law is really nice to me. I am happy with that.

Minsoo also shared that the motivation for his immigration was to provide a better education for his children, and he proudly described his son's academic and professional success. The success of his son seemed to give meaning to his immigration and to compensate for all the negative experiences of racism, physical labor, and the death of his daughter.

Researcher: You said racism was your hardest experience as an immigrant. You had these hard experiences just 20 years ago. You have repeatedly experienced racism. How have your several experiences of racism affected your life?

Minsoo: I was sad, but I solved my inner conflict with the goal and hope that I would provide a good education for my children in America. I was proud that my son entered Mountain High School, which is a famous high school, and I went to his baseball games. I brought three or four Coke boxes, and I was among white people cheering for my son's team. I was proud of being able to communicate with the parents around me even in broken English while drinking the Cokes I brought. That was my pleasure.

As Jinsook, Chulsoo, and Minsoo stated, the meaning of their lives as immigrants was found in being able to provide their children with better educations, seeing their children succeed, and maintaining close relationships with them.

3. Seeking Meaning in Spirituality

As described in the section on Maintaining Hope through Spirituality, spirituality was a source of hope for my research partners: hope for developing spirituality consistently and overcoming physical and psychological agony. Their spirituality gave them spiritual energy by which they made their way through the losses of family members, health, and other human relationships.

Soojin noted that the most meaningful aspect of her life is her faith in being chosen by God, and she could not live without this.

Researcher: What is currently most important to you?

Soojin: I think that I have faith that God chose me. If I am not God's child, how can I live my life?

Minsoo shared that it is only God that he can depend on, and currently he finds most meaning in living a pleasant life, sharing what he has with others, and helping his church.

Minsoo: After my daughter passed away, my wife developed a mental problem and is now not sane.

Researcher: She was shocked by her daughter's death.

Minsoo: Yes, she was.

Researcher: How do you feel about your wife?

Minsoo: I am sad. Before I was fretful and acted irritated by her, but now I suppress my anger. I didn't go to church before, but I have attended church every Sunday for two years.

Researcher: Is going to church a change in your life after your daughter passed away?

Minsoo: Yes, I am distressed and I have no one to turn to.

Researcher: Oh, don't you?

Minsoo: I turn only to God.

...

Minsoo: I am financially stable, and the only way I want to go is the way to God.

...

Researcher: What is most meaningful to you?

Minsoo: Well, I am not clear about that... I just want to live comfortably ... to have a pleasant life and to hope to live with a smile... I am now free of earthly desire.

...

Minsoo: I want to enjoy my life sharing what I have with others.

Researcher: Is this the most meaningful to you?

Minsoo: Yes, it is.

...

Minsoo: I go to church every Sunday and sometimes I go to church on Saturday, too. I look at the church and think about how I can help my church and what I should do for my church.

Chulsoo shared that helping other Korean American elderly Christians to have more positive lives is the most meaningful aspect of his life.

Researcher: What is now most meaningful to you?

Chulsoo: What is most meaningful to me is not special. I am very thankful that I can deliver lectures to the members of the Parents' Mission.

...

Chulsoo: I believe I exist because of God's grace. I think I am healthy and am satisfied with my circumstances. Even though there are people happier than me, I regard myself as being as happy as they are. I hope people who feel less happy than others will seek happiness for themselves. When I deliver lectures at the Parents' Mission, I try to tell them positive stories. I feel there isn't any other way to console them except by telling them about faith. I try to provide them with spiritual resources, and this is my joy.

In the stories of these three research partners, they sought meaning in their old age from their spiritualities. Soojin tried to find meaning in confirming her spiritual identity in the middle of her physical and psychological hardships, and she implied that she maintained hope for heaven and reminded herself that God was helping her to go through her difficulties. Minsoo found meaning in seeking and depending only on God and filling

the needs of his church and other people. To Chulsoo, it was most meaningful to help other Korean American elderly Christians live more positive and meaningful lives. Seeking God, confirming their spiritual identities, and caring for others were their spiritual resources for finding meaning.

4. Seeking Meaning through Enjoying Life

Two research partners responded that enjoying the rest of their days also gave them meaning.

Chulsoo: One benefit of living here is I can freely exercise every day. So I play golf almost every day... This is my pleasure. During the rest of my days, it is more meaningful to enjoy what I can do rather than trying to do something I cannot do. This is what I need to do.

Jinsook: When my husband passed away, I didn't think I wanted to die. He died and I cannot change that. I have this much time that God gave me. I want to enjoy my life... Even though my life is difficult, it flows as it is. I want to enjoy my life as much as I can. So I am learning line dancing. I played golf a lot before my husband got sick. I play golf with a friend. I want to do everything I can. I try to live this kind of life.

Enjoying life while acknowledging they had limited physical capabilities and a short time left gave Chulsoo and Jinsook meaning; they focused on their capabilities to do certain activities.

G. Lack of Agency

Limited English proficiency, a lack of cultural knowledge, racism, responsibilities for others, internalized ageism, and a lack of a sense of responsibility for themselves were all found to be factors that diminished research participants' agency.

1. Limited English Proficiency

Three research participants reported that language was the main factor in their lack of agency because limited English narrowed their choices of relationships and increased

their dependency on their children. For example, Jinsook commented that one of her hardest immigration experiences was caused by her language barrier—her relationships with her neighbors were very limited, and she depended on her adult child as a translator:

Jinsook: My first son became fluent in English two years after arriving here, and he was the top student at his school. He was the valedictorian at his high school commencement..... I and my husband attended the commencement with dirty, tired faces after finishing our work at our sewing factory. Our seats were reserved with a sign saying, “Lee’s family.” We sat there, but English was a problem. Our son spoke English, but I couldn’t understand his English at all. “This is nonsense,” I thought.... Why couldn’t we understand what our son was saying? He said something in English quickly, and I was hurt by my desperate need to understand English.

Researcher: You could not understand what your son was saying in that glorious moment.

Jinsook: Yes, it was really absurd not to be able to understand what my son was saying.

Researcher: What does your memory of this moment remind you of?

Jinsook: I was at a loss for words.... Even now, I still struggle with English.

Researcher: What difficulties do you have because of English?

Jinsook: I am not confident with what I should know exactly. I am living in a condo and there are no Koreans except me. I can greet my neighbors and can manage several things. However, if I get a notice from the office, I need to know what that is.... I seek help from my daughter who is living near me.

Researcher: What do you feel when you struggle with English?

Jinsook: [Sighing deeply.] After I retired and my husband passed away, I asked myself, “Why am I here?” when I thought about myself alone here without my husband.... “Why am I here? I cannot speak English and do not have any relatives here. I just have children.” This thought came into my mind.

Because Jinsook’s limited English caused her to be passive in communication with other English-speaking people, she did not actively initiate relationships with her neighbors and kept depending on her adult child for understanding written materials. Her damaged agency causes her to be isolated and dependent. As a result, she feels emptiness and futility.

Similarly, Mija shared that, when she opened her drive-through store, she depended on her first son's help because of her language issues, and Minsoo said that he could only greet his American neighbors and could not have any other communication with them. He felt frustrated with this, and he wished he could have freer friendships with them. He also reported that he noticed the difference between him and other Korean American elderly people who can speak English fluently. He said he felt keenly the necessity of English. Mija's dependency on her son and Minsoo's inability to initiate relationships with his neighbors gave them the sense of not being able to control their lives.

2. Limited Cultural Knowledge

At the time of Mija's immigration, she was 50 years old and her two sons were a high school senior and an 8th grader. Her sons had to graduate from their schools a few months after they entered them because they arrived in California in March. She said this caused her sons to have a lot of issues at school.

My second son came here when he was an 8th grader. By the way, I did not know junior high school was a 2-year-course. He entered a junior high school in March and graduated in May based on his age. How hard was it for him at school? I met his school counselor and told the counselor that I wanted him to be held back, but the counselor told me that he did not need to be held back because the high school my son would attend had an ESL class, and my son had appeared well adjusted at the junior high school. But I heard that high school had a much higher academic level than junior high school.... I made a mistake.... I should have put him in 7th grade.... So he had a hard time after entering high school, and he said he could not make it. I let him drop out of school when he was a 10th grader and take the high school equivalency exam.... At that time, it seemed he would get into trouble if I let him keep attending school. This was the hardest thing. So, he took the examination. After taking the exam, he kept wanting to study animation. So he wasted two years after dropping out of school while his friends were entering college. He had a really hard time and got a part-time job. He later said to me and my husband that he appreciated that I and my husband waited for him. Finally, he entered California Art School.... I tried my best to give my children my emotional support [she started crying]. I do not know how much I cried after I came here. I accepted baptism at a Catholic church and graduated from a Catholic high school.

Catholic churches do not let their members pray freely using their own prayers. I did not pray my own prayers at that time, and I just piled up pennies while being stifled when I let my second son drop out of school. I prayed the Lord's Prayer 50 times or 100 times a day while I piled up pennies. I prayed that way. I guess my children went through hard times, and it really hurts me that my first son only finished community college.

As Mija said, she and her husband did not have adequate knowledge about the U.S. school system, and her family immigrated to the U.S. when her children were entering college and high school. Because of her lack of knowledge of the U.S. school system, she could not make appropriate choices for her sons, could not assert herself with the school counselor in order to get what she felt her son needed, and could not control the situation. Her lack of agency made her family members experience emotional and spiritual hardships, and she felt guilty that she did not provide proper care for her sons. This is a typical example of a lack of agency caused by limited cultural knowledge.

3. Racism

Two research partners explicitly mentioned that racism caused them to feel they could not control their circumstances because their values and identities were judged and degraded based on their skin color and ethnicity. They also felt that the places they worked and lived were not safe for them and they had to act to protect themselves.

Several examples of experiencing racism come from Minsoo's story:

Minsoo: I had a laundry in Temecula and this happened in Temecula.

Researcher: When did it happen?

Minsoo: I guess it was 1993.

Researcher: How old were you at that time?

Minsoo: I guess I was around 59 at that time. When I was working in my laundry, one customer tried to find fault with me. Pretending to be an important guy, the young guy said to me that I was an ugly Korean. These people say, "Go back to your country," when they confront certain extreme cases, even though they

usually do not use this kind of expression when they feel good. Have you ever heard this?

Researcher: No, I have not.

Minsoo: I have heard this a lot. This is why I entered a sheriff's academy. I wanted to protect myself. I thought I needed to protect myself. I could be protected if I had a certain status.

Researcher: Oh, you entered a sheriff's academy for that reason?

Minsoo: Yes, this guy said, "Go back to Korea." He got angry. He grabbed me by the collar and hit me.

Researcher: Did he?

Minsoo: He did. I was assaulted by him at the counter. I said, "Oh, you did it. You hit me, right?" So, I hit him back and some white people there called the police. Two or three policemen came to my laundry, and I made an emergency call to the sheriff's office. I said I needed help. After 30 minutes, a sheriff came to my laundry.... One of the policemen was pointing a finger at me. So, I said, "What are you doing with your finger?" After that, I twisted the arm of the policeman and he took out his gun. I said, "OK, you got a gun? I don't have anything." At that time, a sheriff entered my store. The sheriff said, "Drop your gun," as he entered my store. The policeman put it away. The sheriff said to the policeman, "Why did you do it? This man is a sheriff. He owns this laundry." People around us told the sheriff what they witnessed and said the young guy said, "Go back to Korea," to me first and grabbed me by the collar. After that, the sheriff ordered the guy to go back home, telling him that he might be arrested if he visited my laundry again. The sheriff also asked the policemen to leave, saying, "We will handle it." The policemen left, and the guy also left my store after hearing the sheriff say, "If you do this again, I will arrest you. OK? You understand that? Get away." I was protected.

Minsoo went on to share another case in which a Korean man was falsely accused of causing a car accident. Minsoo helped the accused man and revealed that the car accident was caused by the accuser, who was a family member of a policeman. He said he received an apology from the policeman after he investigated the case. At the end of this description, Minsoo said that there were a lot of similar cases at that time, and many Koreans were treated unfairly.

Minsoo also described an important historical incident, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, based on his own experience.

Minsoo [showing me an old newspaper article in a picture frame]: They did not broadcast this. John McCain was a presidential candidate for the Republicans.... He had an interview with me for five minutes, and the newspaper article did not include what I said. This was not a conflict between Koreans and black people, but a conflict between whites and blacks. Why did we have to incur damages? ... Look at this [pointed to the newspaper article]. What did he say?

Researcher: Hispanic gangsters.

Minsoo: Gangsters. The riots of black people. They said this. I do not agree with them. The reason for the riot was the conflict between blacks and whites. But they did not say this. Why? I said this in an interview with CNN, but they did not report what I said. A newscaster just reported that Mr. Cho complained as a Korean community leader. They reported this and omitted what I said. We Koreans needed political power, and we have made major progress politically.... We can now proudly say we are Koreans [smiling]. When Korean immigration began, they said Koreans were ugly if we said we were Koreans....

Researcher: Do you mean you did not say you were from Korea when they asked where you were from?

Minsoo: No, I didn't. Most Koreans didn't.

Researcher: Most Koreans?

Minsoo: Yes, we just nodded our heads or said we were from Japan because they despised us.

Researcher: Have you done this?

Minsoo: Many times I didn't say anything.

Researcher: You didn't say anything?

Minsoo: No.

Researcher: If so, did they think it was strange?

Minsoo: They might have thought in that way. The young guy I fought with said, "Go back to your country," when I answered I was a Korean.

Researcher: You had this experience in Claremont?

Minsoo: Yes, ...

Researcher: Just 22 years ago?

Minsoo: Yes...

Researcher: You said racism was your hardest experience as an immigrant. You had these hard experiences just 20 years ago. You have repeatedly experienced racism. How have your several experiences of racism affected your life?

Minsoo: I was sad, but I solved my inner conflict with the goal and hope that I would provide a good education for my children in America. I was proud that my son entered Beverly Hills High School, which is a famous high school, and I went to his baseball games. I brought three or four Coke boxes, and I was among white people cheering for my son's team. I was proud of being able to communicate with the parents around me even in broken English while drinking the Cokes I brought. That was my pleasure.

Another example of racism is from Soojin's story. Soojin reported that her husband experienced racism in his workplace.

We were living in Orange County... My husband got a job in the engineering field and he did not experience any discrimination based on his race in his company. This was because he was very capable and earned a good wage from making plane blueprints. Later, he got a job with McDonnell Douglas because the blueprints he made were delivered to that company and he maintained a relationship with the company. People envied him, and he experienced a lot of stress. This was because he got a higher position in the company when he was first hired, but others moved up from lower positions. One person living in Garden Grove in Orange County said directly to my husband that it was not Garden Grove anymore, but Trash Grove. I asked my husband if he would resign from the company because I saw him suffer from racism when he was at home, but his workplace was too good to resign from.... I think he had hard times because of racism and competition in the company.

According to Soojin, her husband endured racism at his company in order to maintain financial stability, rather than expressing his own feelings and opinions.

As described by Minsoo and Soojin, experiencing racism was an important reason why they and Soojin's husband felt "sad" and experienced emotional "stress." The feeling of being constrained by racial prejudice seriously prevented them from revealing themselves; they concealed their identities as Koreans and their opinions were disregarded and distorted by members of the dominant culture.

4. Responsibilities for Others

Responsibilities for others sometimes hindered this population from exercising agency. For example, Soojin mentioned that because of her voluntary responsibility for

caring for other elderly church members, she could not move to a church where she could be provided with the spiritual nourishment that she thought she required for her survival. Her heavy responsibility caused her to experience more spiritual thirst, but, at the same time, prevented her from using her own agency to choose her own way of meeting it.

5. Internalized Ageism

When ageism is internalized, it limits the agency of elderly people by increasing their sense of dependency and inability to act on their own. Ageism, as described in the introduction, is usually defined as discrimination toward elderly people by the younger generation. However, stories told by the research participants reflect their own ageism toward elderly people. For example, Mija thought that elderly people in her church should quit their voluntary work in order to yield the opportunities to younger church members, and they should live lives appropriate to their ages.

Mija: I think people who are older than seventy or eighty should quit the church choir. I saw some elderly people in the choir and thought younger people should be there instead of them. They have to act their ages.

Researcher: Do you think it is not appropriate for their age if elderly people participate in a church choir or in other church work?

Mija: I think they should quit.

Researcher: Why do you think that?

Mija: Each person has their own time for voluntary work, and once they get old, they should give it up.

Researcher: Do you mean they have to yield their jobs to the younger generation?

Mija: I think they should take the initiative only before they get old.

Researcher: Do you mean they have to give up the initiative to volunteer?

Mija: Yes, I think so.

Minjung also negatively commented on her own aging process and said she did not want to be treated like other elderly people.

Minjung: I have already become elderly.

Researcher: How do you feel when you hear the word *elderly*?

Minjung: Well, I am in the process of becoming accustomed to the word step by step, even though I still have a negative reaction because I now hear the word frequently.

Researcher: What aspect of your aging do you feel negatively about?

Minjung: I am a person who is interested in social issues like young people are. I am old externally, but I still have as much passion as young people do internally.... If I focus on one thing, I am more passionate than young people. This is my personality. So, I am unhappy about hearing the word *elderly*. Why don't people differentiate a person like me from other elderly people? I wish I was differentiated from other elderly people.

Researcher: You wish you were treated special.

Minjung: Yes.

As related by Minjung, she thought elderly people do not feel passionate about social issues, and she had a negative reaction when she was regarded as elderly. This reveals that she had a negative attitude toward her own age and other elderly people and wanted to separate herself from them.

Mija's and Minjung's negative and discriminatory attitudes toward elderly people reflected that they internalized the ageism which is prevalent in American society without questioning it, and they did not pay attention to their own agency and capabilities, such as resilience, wisdom, life experiences, and strong desires for better lives.

6. Lack of a Sense of Responsibility for One's Own Life

Soojin shared her impression that some Korean American elderly people do not execute their own responsibilities for their lives and tend to depend on others rather than fulfill their responsibilities.

Soojin: They expect too much from others. Even though they are old, they do not even think their lives are theirs.

Researcher: What do they expect from others?

Soojin: They want to be served. Even though they should feel thankful about being served, they seem to take being served for granted. They do not think, “It’s my life.” They do not try to do anything for themselves. They depend on their children too much. I think this is very Korean. Even though they have lived for a long time in America, they seem to not give this up.

Researcher: You think they are still dependent.

Soojin: Yes, I do.

In her story, Soojin pointed out that some Korean American elderly immigrants lack the agency to fulfill their own responsibilities and are dependent on others, particularly their children. Soojin thought this is a Korean cultural practice they should give up, and they need to be more active in using their own agency in their lives.

H. Practicing Agency

Even though some of the research partners experienced a lack of agency due to limited English skills, a lack of cultural knowledge, racism, a sense of responsibility for others, internalized ageism, and a lack of a sense of responsibility for their own lives, the research partners still practiced agency in other aspects of their lives. Mija mentioned that, when she was young, she had a difficult time with her mother-in-law. In traditional Korean culture, in many cases, the agency of daughters-in-law is totally limited and controlled by their mothers-in-law. For example, Mija could not choose her own style of housekeeping and had to follow her mother-in-law’s. Her parents-in-law immigrated to the U.S. before her family did, and her mother-in-law moved in with Mija’s family when she began experiencing troubles with mild dementia. Even after becoming a senior citizen in the U.S., Mija experienced cultural differences with her mother-in-law, but she did her best to care for her. In spite of her harsh experiences and limited agency as a daughter-in-law in Korea, she chose to use her agency to reconcile with her mother-in-law.

I thought that because my mother-in-law had to depend on me, she had more difficulties than me....

Later, I felt like my mother-in-law was my older sister, and I do not regret that I treated her like that... I think mothers-in-law should change their minds. My mother-in-law used to say she also had had a very hard time with her mother-in-law. People say mothers-in-law who had hard times with their mothers-in-law tend to be harsh to their daughters-in-law. I think my mother-in-law was not close to me, and I think I should forget my bad experiences with her.

Her mother-in-law was old and weak, and so, far from wanting to treat her mother-in-law with revenge for her past difficult experiences as a daughter-in-law, she used her agency to reconcile herself with and take care of her mother-in-law. She overcame her past damaged agency by practicing her current active agency and moving beyond her past.

In Minsoo's story, Minsoo decided to enter a sheriff's academy after experiencing racism in order to protect himself and his family. In the situation when his agency was obstructed by prejudice, he used his agency to find a way of protecting himself and his family, and he actively responded to his customer who behaved as a racist. Both Mija and Minsoo used their own agency in situations where their agency was threatened by social and cultural biases and prejudices.

I. Failure to Accept Life as It Is

Three research participants reported that they had regrets about their pasts. Jinsook shared that she felt regret about not having enough conversations with her husband about the conflicts between him and their children.

I did not have conversations with my husband when my family had difficulties because my children married non-Koreans. I was too scared of him. However, I now think I should have been braver and tried to discuss this with him.... I should have said something like, "We should do this, or we should wait," I regret this.

Jinsook also noted that she regretted immigrating when her husband passed away and she had to do everything related to the maintenance of her house. According to her, she could

not ask for help from her children because they were too busy. She also mentioned that she felt lonely even though she had three children, and this caused her to feel homesick. She said she became sadder when she was sick and her children were not helpful, and her English was not good enough to communicate freely with her neighbors. She said, “Anyway, it was my fault for leaving Korea.”

Soojin said she regretted her mistakes in her relationship with her mother-in-law:

My mother-in-law came to America to live with us before my husband worked for McDonnell Douglas. She lost her husband when she was 23, and my hardships started when she arrived. We bought a townhouse to live with her, but at that time I was struggling with homesickness. It was almost impossible for me to live with her, even though when I married my husband I regarded it as very natural to live with her. What could she do for 24 hours in Orange County? She was a very independent person, and after reading Korean newspapers, she decided to live in L.A. My husband and I had a hard time because of her decision. We did not feel we could let her live alone in L.A.... living alone there was difficult for her.... After a lot of years, even though I treated her well, I realized she showed me her real personality. Our relationship was one-sided, but because of my faith, I accepted the situation. I now think I was not wise at that time. I am now 79.... If I could go back to the situation, I would like to honestly tell her what I felt and ask her what she wanted from me. I regret I did not have enough conversations with her. One more regret is that I did not help her to remarry when one of my neighbors tried to introduce one of his friends to her. If I were in the same situation again, I would help her to meet him. At that time, I was too young and did not ask her to meet the man because I thought she came here to live with her son. I regret that I did not do that. If I had been wiser, I would have given her a chance to live with a man and that would have been good for both her and us. If I think about the situation, I just did what I thought was humanly possible and did not do more than that. I was not wise enough, nor did I give her a chance. I should have had more conversations with her.

Chulsoo expressed regrets about his relationship with his late wife:

My biggest regret is about my wife. I did not take care of her enough, and she experienced many difficulties in my church ministry.... I am sorry about that. I should have understood more about her. I actually did my best to take care of her for 15 years, but I think I should have treated her better before her sickness. I always lament this before God [he started crying], and I always think that I should have helped her by better understanding her and should have lived harmoniously with her.... I regret that I did not take care of her better, nor understand her better. I should have been nicer to her.... After my wife passed away, I saw her in my

dreams for 3 years and I always missed her.

As described by Chulsoo, even though he spent 15 years taking care of his wife, he regretted that he was not generous and nice enough to her. However, this is a common problem in Korean ministry. Most Korean pastors are busy with their church ministries and do not think they can spend time with their families. But his story differs from others' because his wife suffered from a disease for a long time and this made him feel sorrier for her.

Minsoo shared that he regretted immigrating to America after his daughter passed away due to lung cancer, which was one year and four months before the interview:

She graduated from U.C.L.A., majoring in economics. However, since she had entered high school, she had smoked too much.... I regretted immigrating because I thought she would not have smoked if I had stayed in Korea.... After immigrating, her personality changed when she studied here.... my wife and I still wake up at one or two o'clock every morning.... Her room is on the second floor, and I feel like I hear the sounds of her footsteps and experience illusions of her.... My wife has mental problems and she is not normal now.... My heart was broken. I didn't attend church before, but now I go to my church every Sunday and have done so for two years.

Minsoo described how he had been a successful businessman in Korea before immigration, and after he immigrated to America, he had to work at hard physical labor jobs. He became successful in this country but, when he lost his daughter, he thought that it would have been better for him to have stayed in Korea. Everyone around him had tried to dissuade him from immigrating to America because he enjoyed an upper class life in Korea. He said he did not regret immigrating when he worked at hard physical jobs because he was too busy to think about his life and himself, but he came to look back on his life after his daughter's death. This caused him to deeply regret immigrating.

The regrets described by these four research participants seemed to cause them to despair because they could not change their pasts. They experienced remorse about not being wise or generous enough with their family members and, for Chulsoo, his regrets about his wife seemed to be the most difficult aspect of his life. Soojin regretted not having conversations with her husband about the problems of their children's interracial marriages, and Jinsook's regret was also connected to one of her hardest experiences during her life as an immigrant. When Korean immigrants regret their pasts, they tend to regret immigrating, and this intensifies their despair.

As discussed in the introduction, according to Erikson, ego integrity means accepting life as it is, and a person with ego integrity defends his/her dignity against all past failures. Conversely, rejecting events in one's own life and feeling regret for the past causes despair. In Jinsook's and Minsoo's stories, they shared their regrets about immigrating. After her husband's death and her subsequently difficult life, Jinsook regretted her decision to immigrate. After his daughter passed away, Minsoo also regretted his decision to immigrate. Even though they did not regret their whole lives as immigrants, they did not accept their lives as they were and thus, they regretted immigrating. This means, from the perspective of Erikson, they were in despair. In the stories of Jinsook, Soojin, and Chulsoo, they also did not accept certain aspects of their lives and regretted their pasts. Therefore, pastoral practices need to focus on guiding them to look back on their pasts, to acknowledge the situations in which they made decisions and choices and why they made those decisions or choices, and to accept their decisions to immigrate and their pasts.

J. Acceptance of Life as It Is

For three of the research partners, accepting aging and their upcoming deaths was an important challenge. They observed that they accepted aging and acknowledged that death was approaching. However, their stories about aging and future deaths were filled with sadness and hopelessness. Minjung shared, “Yes, I accept my aging. If a machine does not work, we have to throw it away. If my body does not work, I should throw it away. I just accept that I will die someday.” Minjung compares her old body to a machine. In her remark, she expressed her negative expectations for the present and the future, and her focus was limited only to physical decline. She did not express hope for a better life in other areas.

Similarly, Chulsoo mentioned that he was old and was like a tree that someday loses all its leaves: “I feel that parts of my life fall off just as trees start losing their leaves when winter approaches. How does life end? Life ends like this. I accept this.” As Minjung and Chulsoo stated, they accepted that they were aging and death was closer every day. However, they shared this with sadness and mixed emotions.

Mija was concerned her death would be accompanied by pain, and currently, her most significant concern was to die without pain:

Researcher: What is now most meaningful to you?

Mija: I do not know what the answer is if you are talking about meaning. I will leave someday. When I leave, I want to have the blessing of death as the Korean proverb says.

Researcher: The blessing of death?

Mija: Every person goes through pain when they die. I hope God takes my last breath without pain.

Researcher: Is this your biggest hope?

Mija: Yes, this is my hope.

These three research participants accepted the reality that they were aging and would die someday, but their acceptance of their future was accompanied with sadness, concern, and anxiety. Particularly, their stories were permeated by hopelessness, but, at the same time, they seemed to feel their hopelessness was a natural result of aging.

K. Conclusion

My research findings present both research partners' sufferings and their resilient power. In the face of various challenges, they still maintained hope for themselves, the world, and the future. However, their hope was not just future-oriented. Rather, their hope was deep-rooted in both the future and the present. Some of them hoped to see their family members in heaven in the future, and this hope for the future motivated them to live hopeful and meaningful lives on earth in the present. They also hoped to maintain their health, to enjoy daily mundane activities, and to listen to sermons which gave them spiritual meaning and wisdom in the present. Their hope was also communal in that they hoped their faith communities would be places where they could find meaning and develop spiritually.

Korean American churches and children were both causes of despair and resources for hope and meaning for the research partners. Spirituality was an important resource for their meaning and hope, but when spiritual development was limited by physical and other issues, spirituality became a cause of despair. Pride in their children gave them meaning, but a lack of support from or relationships with their children caused them to despair. Aging was also a cause of despair, but for some it became a resource for wisdom and spirituality.

Chapter IV

Discussion of the Research Findings

In this chapter, I discuss my research findings using contextual, spiritual, and psychological lenses. For the contextual lenses, I draw on theories of acculturation, ageism, and religious motivation. For the spiritual lens, I use Kierkegaard's concept of despair. Applying the psychological lens of Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT), I interpret the despair experiences of my research partners. I engage in dialogues with these three academic disciplines from a practical theological viewpoint in order to deepen my understanding of the despair experiences of my research participants and to propose more effective practices of care for elderly Korean American Christian immigrants. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat define practical theology as "*critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God.*"¹³¹ They also argue that practical theology aims at enabling "the Church to perform faithfully as it participates in God's on-going mission in, to and for the world" by critically and theologically reflecting on situations and by providing insightful strategies for effective practices.¹³² Toward this end, practical theology begins with specific human situations and engages in dialogues with various theologies and sciences in order to interpret human experiences and produce effective understandings and responses to them. Swinton and Mowat explain the roles of the social sciences in practical theology as follows: "The

¹³¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 25.

¹³² Ibid.

social sciences have offered practical theologians vital access to the nature of the human mind, human culture, the wider dimensions of church life and the implications of the social and political dimensions of society for the process of theological reflection.”¹³³

On the same note, Richard Osmer insists that utilizing the knowledge and perspectives of the social sciences leads to intellectual growth, and theoretical interpretation along with thoughtfulness is necessary for Christian ministers to make wise judgments.¹³⁴ To integrate other fields into theology is, to Osmer, “a spirituality of sagely wisdom” involving reflection “on the meaning of discernible patterns discovered by the natural and social sciences.”¹³⁵ The social sciences allow me to “recognize the level of life” they address, to avoid reductionism, and to think about certain phenomena in multidisciplinary ways.¹³⁶ This integrative character of practical theology enables it to have dialogues with various social sciences.

A. Contextual Dimension of Despair

In this section, I investigate and interpret the experiences of acculturation and ageism of my six research partners in Korean American churches through lenses of the social sciences, mainly cross-cultural psychology and gerontology.

1. Acculturation

As described in the previous chapter, my research partners have experienced various acculturation issues and stressors, and their acculturation processes have affected them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As the research partners described their

¹³³ Ibid., vi.

¹³⁴ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 82.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 84, 89.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 119.

immigration experiences, they all went through important life transitions and changes from familiar to foreign environments. To understand their acculturation experiences, I adopt useful lenses from the psychosocial literature on immigration.

Acculturation is now one of the main foci in cross-cultural psychology, sociology, and anthropology. However, accepted definitions of the concept and tools for measuring it are not fully developed within these fields, let alone between them. Here I will explore three models of acculturation—unidimensional, bidimensional, and multidimensional—and use them to analyze the experiences of my research partners.

a. Unidimensional Definition of Acculturation

According to Seth J. Schwartz and his colleagues, acculturation was originally understood as a unidimensional process in which immigrants acquired the culture of the host society, and, at the same time, became assimilated into the host society without retaining their original cultural heritage: “as migrants acquired the values, practices, and beliefs of their new homelands, they were expected to discard those from their cultural heritage.”¹³⁷ According to this definition, it was believed that acculturation ended with assimilation, the forgetting of the cultural heritage of their original country. Thus, as Angela-MinhTu D. Nguyen and Verónica Benet-Martínez point out, the unidimensional model equates “involvement and identification with one culture to a lack of involvement and identification with the other culture.”¹³⁸ This simplistic assumption and conceptual limitation presupposes that cultural change occurs in one direction. According to Pamela

¹³⁷ Seth J. Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," *American Psychologist* 65, no. 4 (2010): 238.

¹³⁸ Angela-MinhTu D. Nguyen and Verónica Benet-Martínez, "Biculturalism Unpacked: Components, Measurement, Individual Differences, and Outcomes," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 104.

Balls Organista, Gerardo Marin, and Kevin M. Chun, the unidimensional model was the major theory of acculturation at the beginning of the 20th century, and the “melting pot” paradigm in which newcomers were expected to conform to the culture of the host society was the representative image of this model.¹³⁹ Jenny Hyun Chung Pak criticizes this “melting pot” idea as a metaphor and misconception that immigrants lose their old identities and become “indistinguishable” within the host culture.¹⁴⁰

David L. Sam gives a historical review of the unidimensional model of acculturation:

Powell (1880, 1883) is accredited as the first person to have used the term “acculturation” in the English language, although the topic has its root in antiquity ... As a concept, Powell (1983) suggested that “acculturation” referred to psychological changes induced by cross-cultural imitation. McGee (1898), working from an anthropological perspective, defined acculturation to be the process of exchange and mutual improvement by which societies advanced from savagery, to barbarism, to civilization, and to enlightenment. From a sociological perspective, Simons (1901) regarded acculturation to be a two-way process of “reciprocal accommodation.” She nevertheless equated the word to the English term “assimilation” and defined “assimilation” as the process of adjustment or accommodation which occurs between the members of two different races giving rise to the synonymous use of the terms. “Assimilation” and “acculturation” have from the outset been regarded as synonymous even though from two different social science disciplines. While anthropologists preferred to use the term “acculturation,” sociologists preferred to use the term “assimilation.” Furthermore, anthropologists’ use of the term “acculturation” was primarily concerned with how so-called “primitive” societies changed to become more civilized following cultural contact with an enlightened group of people. On the other hand, sociologists’ use of the term “assimilation” or “acculturation” was more directed towards “immigrants” who, through contact with the “host nationals,” gradually conformed to the ways of life of the host people.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Pamela Balls Organista, Gerardo Marin, and Kevin M. Chun, *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 101.

¹⁴⁰ Jenny Hyun Chung Pak, *Korean American Women: Stories of Acculturation and Changing Selves* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 19.

¹⁴¹ David L. Sam, "Acculturation: Conceptual Background and Core Components," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, ed. David L. Sam and John W. Berry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12-13.

As described by Sam, in the early concept of acculturation, acculturation was a process through which underdeveloped people or groups learned civilized culture from more developed societies or immigrants adapted to and accepted the culture of their host society while losing their own cultural assets. In the American context, Pak comments that this assimilation perspective causes the misconception that immigrants reject their own “‘inferior’ culture of origin for the new ‘superior’ American culture.”¹⁴²

Bryan S. K. Kim, Annie J. Ahn, and N. Alexandra Lam state that most acculturation scholars acknowledge that R. Redfield, R. Linton, and M. J. Herskovits were the first authors to offer the classical and academic definition of acculturation in 1936. Kim, Ahn, and Lam cite the definition of acculturation as follows: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.”¹⁴³ Later, according to Sam, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defined acculturation in 2004 as “the progressive adoption of elements of a foreign culture (ideas, words, values, norms, behavior, institutions) by persons, groups or classes of a given culture.”¹⁴⁴ Sam criticizes these two definitions for identifying acculturation with assimilation and disregarding the possibility of immigrants’ “rejection of” or “resistance to” the cultural elements of the host society during the acculturation process.¹⁴⁵ As described above, the unidimensional model of

¹⁴² Pak, *Korean American Women: Stories of Acculturation and Changing Selves*, 20.

¹⁴³ Bryan S. K. Kim, Annie J. Ahn, and N. Alexandra Lam, "Theories and Research on Acculturation and Enculturation Experiences among Asian American Families," in *Handbook of Mental Health and Acculturation in Asian American Families*, ed. Nhi-ha Trinh, et al. (New York: Humana Press, 2009), 26.

¹⁴⁴ Sam, "Acculturation: Conceptual Background and Core Components," 11.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

acculturation tends to equate acculturation with assimilation and overlooks the reciprocal interaction and development between immigrants and their host society.

b. Bidimensional Definition of Acculturation

Unlike the unidimensional model of acculturation, the bidimensional model does not presuppose that assimilation is natural and necessary. This model contends that immigrants can sustain their own cultural assets and heritage while they learn and practice the beliefs, values, and practices of the host country. According to Schwartz et al., around the early 1980s cultural psychologists started recognizing the limits of the unidimensional model of acculturation and its disconnect with the real lives of immigrants, and they suggested a bidimensional model of acculturation in which “acquiring the beliefs, values, and practices of the receiving country does not automatically imply that an immigrant will discard (or stop endorsing) the beliefs, values, and practices of her or his country of origin.”¹⁴⁶

A representative scholar promoting this model is John W. Berry, who discusses the concept of acculturation by groups versus individual psychological acculturation. He states that the original meaning of *acculturation* referred to cultural changes experienced by groups, while he applies the concept of acculturation to the psychological changes of individuals. This understanding was initially proposed by T. Graves and refers to the psychological changes and subsequent outcomes that individuals experience during and after their acculturation processes.¹⁴⁷ Kim, Ahn, and Lam state that psychological acculturation also includes changes in “attitudes, values, and identity as a result of being

¹⁴⁶ Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," 238.

¹⁴⁷ John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46, no. 1 (1997): 6.

in contact with other cultures.”¹⁴⁸ Berry’s approach is important in that he emphasizes individual differences in the acculturation process being experienced by a group of people.¹⁴⁹

Berry defines *acculturation* as “a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer term psychological and sociocultural adaptations” among two or more cultural groups.¹⁵⁰ As seen in his definition of acculturation, he insists that acculturation happens in two different spheres: cultural and psychological. In the cultural sphere, individuals interact with the social context in which they acculturate. The study of this “general acculturation” focuses on the common factors between acculturating groups, such as changes in cultural practices, and seeks to understand the important characteristics of the two original groups prior to the contact, the nature of their contact, and the resulting changes of the contact.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, in the psychological sphere, individuals respond differently to their social context and have different levels of participation in the host culture.¹⁵² When discussing this psychological sphere of acculturation, Berry emphasizes individual differences in their psychological and sociocultural responses to the new environment of the host society and subsequent “changes in a person’s

¹⁴⁸ Kim, Ahn, and Lam, "Theories and Research on Acculturation and Enculturation Experiences among Asian American Families," 26.

¹⁴⁹ Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," 7.

¹⁵⁰ Berry, "Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview," in *Acculturation and Parent–Child Relationships: Measurement and Development*, ed. Marc H. Bornstein and Linda R. Cote (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2006), 13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

behavioral repertoire.”¹⁵³ Sam also argues that psychological acculturation often accompanies affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes in individuals as they participate in social acculturation.¹⁵⁴

One of Berry’s contributions is his delineation of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. According to Berry, these strategies initially depend on two related components: “attitudes (an individual’s preference about how to acculturate), and behaviors (a person’s actual activities) that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters.”¹⁵⁵ However, the use of these strategies is often constrained by the dominant group, and acculturating individuals are not fully empowered to use their own preferred acculturation strategies.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, Berry added a third component to acculturation strategies: acculturation expectations and the role of the dominant group.¹⁵⁷ This third component captures the perspectives of the dominant group on the acculturation of the non-dominant group and emphasizes the mutual influences on both dominant and non-dominant groups.

Berry’s acculturation strategies are derived from immigrants’ orientations toward their own cultural group and towards other groups: “(1) a relative preference for maintaining one’s heritage culture and identity, and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural

¹⁵³ Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29 (2005): 699.

¹⁵⁴ Sam, "Acculturation: Conceptual Background and Core Components," 16.

¹⁵⁵ Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," 704.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Berry, "Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation," in *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement, and Applied Research*, ed. Kevin M. Chun, Pamela Balls Organista, and Gerardo Marin (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2003), 25.

groups.”¹⁵⁸ Within Berry’s model, the two relative preferences of sticking to one’s own culture and of interacting with the values, cultures, and practices of the host society intersect and result in the four acculturation categories:

From the point of view of non-dominant groups ... when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the assimilation strategy is defined. Here, individuals prefer to shed their heritage culture, and become absorbed into the dominant society. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the separation alternative is defined. Here, individuals turn their back on involvement with other cultural groups, and turn inward toward their heritage culture. When there is an interest in both maintaining one’s heritage culture while in daily interactions with other groups, integration is the option. In this case, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, and at the same time seeking, as a member of an ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in heritage cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined.¹⁵⁹

According to Schwartz et al., some recent studies have suggested that Berry’s integration strategy is often associated with the most favorable and healthy psychosocial outcomes, and people who use this strategy tend to be better adjusted in the host society and show more ability to integrate their cultural heritage and the host culture.¹⁶⁰ Schwartz et al. argue that the degree of ease versus the difficulty of acculturation is, at least in part, associated with the degree of similarity between the heritage culture and the host culture.¹⁶¹

Berry also emphasizes the mutual cultural exchanges between encountering

¹⁵⁸ Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," 704.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 705.

¹⁶⁰ Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," 238.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

cultural groups and is interested in how they “relate to each other and change as a result of their attempts to live together in culturally plural societies.”¹⁶² He asserts that “the mutual or reciprocal nature of acculturation” depends on the open and inclusive attitudes from the side of the host society.¹⁶³ He insists that the four acculturation strategies presuppose that immigrants have enough freedom to choose their own acculturation strategies, but, in many cases, “the dominant group enforces certain forms of acculturation, or constrains the choices of non-dominant groups or individuals.”¹⁶⁴ In the case of an oppressive environment in which the dominant group oppresses the non-dominant group, Berry uses different definitions for the four acculturation strategies:

Assimilation, when sought by the dominant acculturating group, is termed the “melting pot”. When separation is forced by the dominant group it is called “segregation”. Marginalization, when imposed by the dominant group, is called “exclusion”. Finally, integration, when diversity is an accepted feature of the society as a whole, including all the various ethnocultural groups, is called “multiculturalism”. With the use of this framework, comparisons can be made between individuals and their groups, and between nondominant peoples and the larger society.¹⁶⁵

He argues that the ideal end point of the acculturation strategies, integration, is possible only when the dominant group is “open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity.”¹⁶⁶

c. Multidimensional Definition of Acculturation

Even though Berry’s model has been acknowledged as a useful theory of acculturation, many scholars criticize his theory. Simon Ozer states that his theory is “too

¹⁶² Berry, "Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview," 14.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," 705-06.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 706.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

generalizing and inflexible in categorizing and describing groups and new situations” and lacks “the crucial specific individual and contextual variances.”¹⁶⁷ According to Ozer, Berry fails to explain the diverse forms of acculturation across different ethnic groups and host societies. Ozer insists that different ethnic groups acculturate differently in varying cultural or subcultural contexts and change their strategies of acculturation dynamically.¹⁶⁸

Pak also criticizes Berry’s model for locating people undergoing acculturation “in a particular box rather than inhabiting different boxes in relation to different traits or settings.”¹⁶⁹ She argues that Berry fails to explain why different individuals have varying views of their own cultures and/or their host cultures and disregards “the divergent paths that lead to different outcomes.”¹⁷⁰ According to Pak, Keefe and Padilla introduced the concept of “selective acculturation,” which describes a shared tendency among immigrants to choose to accept certain aspects of the host culture while retaining particular heritage cultural traditions and patterns.¹⁷¹ Based on this selective acculturation model, Pak summarizes Keefe and Padilla’s multidimensional model as follows:

This model recognizes that the acquisition of new cultural traits and the relinquishing of traditional traits vary from trait to trait such that an individual can adopt new values and customs while simultaneously retaining some traditional values and customs. While measuring each aspect of culture change independently, this model also does not assume that a bicultural individual is highly adept in both cultures but rather selectively adopts certain new traits while maintaining other

¹⁶⁷ Simon Ozer, "Theories and Methodologies in Acculturation Psychology: The Emergence of a Scientific Revolution?," *Psychological Studies* 58, no. 3 (2013): 343.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Pak, *Korean American Women: Stories of Acculturation and Changing Selves*, 22.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 21-23.

traditional traits.¹⁷²

As summarized by Pak, the multidimensional model recognizes that, in their acculturation processes, immigrants and ethnic minorities undergo independent changes in each area of their lives, and cultural tendencies in various environments and acculturation processes need to be understood multidimensionally. Pak also argues that each ethnic group has its own diversity and transitory characteristics, and it is impossible to generalize one ethnic group's acculturation style to other ethnic groups.¹⁷³ She points out the importance of the agency of immigrants and bicultural individuals and regards them as “‘actors’ who live and interpret their own reality while considering the specificity that changing cultures takes on in different contexts and situations.”¹⁷⁴

Emphasizing the realities of assimilation driven by external social forces and by prejudice and discrimination, Organista, Marin, and Chun define acculturation as

a dynamic and multidimensional process of adaptation that occurs when distinct cultures come into sustained contact. It involves different degrees and instances of culture learning and maintenance that are contingent upon individual, group, and environmental factors. Acculturation is dynamic because it is a continuous and fluctuating process and it is multidimensional because it transpires across numerous indices of psychosocial functioning and can result in multiple adaptation outcomes.¹⁷⁵

Thus, the multidimensional model of acculturation assumes that bicultural individuals do not adopt and practice their two cultures in homogenous ways. This model emphasizes that acculturation changes occur in many different realms of life and in different life stages of immigrants. I will draw from this multidimensional model of acculturation for a

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Organista, Marin, and Chun, *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States*, 105.

more holistic understanding of acculturation, but, at the same time, I will partially adopt Berry's perspectives on acculturation because aspects of his model, such as acculturation stress, still provide useful lenses for understanding the lives of immigrants. In addition to using the basic lenses of the bidimensional and multidimensional models of acculturation, I will explore more details about acculturation in order to interpret the acculturation experiences of my six research partners.

2. Acculturation Stress

During the process of acculturation, immigrants go through changes in identity, values, behaviors, cognition, and attitudes. In dealing with and resolving their emotional and cultural conflicts in their new, reconfigured society, immigrants may experience many stressors. Berry calls these stressors "acculturation stresses" and defines acculturation stress as "a response by people to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact."¹⁷⁶ Young-Me Lee reports that common acculturation stressors of elderly Korean immigrants are "discrimination, language inadequacy, the lack of social and financial resources, frustration associated with unemployment and low income, feeling of not belonging in the host society, and a sense of anxious disorientation in response to the unfamiliar environment."¹⁷⁷ Moreover, according to Hae-Ra Han et al., elderly Korean immigrants are among other elderly immigrant groups that experience the most intense acculturation stress because most elderly Korean immigrants are, due to their relatively recent immigration history, first-generation immigrants and tend to be mainly

¹⁷⁶ John W. Berry, "Stress Perspectives on Acculturation," in *Acculturation: Conceptual Background and Core Components*, ed. David L. Sam and John W. Berry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43.

¹⁷⁷ Lee, "Immigration Experience among Elderly Korean Immigrants," 403-04.

monolingual and to stick to their traditional beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.¹⁷⁸ Yuri Jang et al. also point out that elderly Korean immigrants experience more acculturation stress because elderly Korean immigrants have come from a relatively homogeneous country, and this causes this group to experience more intense acculturation stress in the culturally and ethnically diverse American society.¹⁷⁹ Because of their previous social and cultural context, elderly Korean American immigrants tend to go through more intense changes in their identity, values, behaviors, cognition, and attitudes, and their more intense changes in their various life spheres lead them to be exposed to more acculturation stress.

The acculturation stresses that Elderly Korean American immigrants experience cause intense mental health problems. Based on a unidimensional understanding of acculturation, many scholars have tried to explore the relationship between acculturation and the mental health problems of immigrants, and they usually have concluded that less acculturation may lead to more mental health problems. However, Yuri Jang and David A. Chiriboga argue that the main factor which causes mental health problems is not acculturation itself, but acculturation stress.¹⁸⁰ According to Jang and Chiriboga, elderly Korean American immigrants as a group have low levels of English proficiency and acculturation and higher levels of depressive symptoms than other racial/ethnic elderly groups.¹⁸¹ Jang and Chiriboga state that elderly Korean immigrants' low level of

¹⁷⁸ Han et al., "Correlates of Depression in the Korean American Elderly: Focusing on Personal Resources of Social Support," 116.

¹⁷⁹ Yuri Jang et al., "A Bidimensional Model of Acculturation for Korean American Older Adults," *Journal of Aging Studies* 21, no. 3 (2007): 269.

¹⁸⁰ Yuri Jang and David A. Chiriboga, "Living in a Different World: Acculturative Stress among Korean American Elders," *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* 65B, no. 1 (2010): 19.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

acculturation is expected to remain due to their limited opportunities for education and social participation. Thus, Jang and Chiriboga argue that rather than removing the cause of stress by increasing an individual's level of acculturation, such as English language training, intervention may be more effective when it focuses on helping "reduce perceived stressfulness by promoting positive appraisals and the use of effective coping strategies" as a key solution.¹⁸²

As described in the previous chapter, the research partners in this project have experienced acculturation stress caused by language limitations, racism, and homesickness. Based on their experiences, in this chapter I explore acculturation theories which explain how these factors cause acculturation stress for elderly Korean American immigrants.

a. Limited English Proficiency

Limited English proficiency is supposed to be the biggest contributing factor to acculturation stress for Korean American elderly immigrants. According to Sadhna Diwan, Asian American elderly immigrants aged 65 years and older have the highest rates of limited English proficiency among the major ethnic minority groups in the United States.¹⁸³ Because most Korean American elderly immigrants immigrated to the United States after they finished their public education in Korea, their opportunities for receiving public and advanced education in the United States have been very limited. In the past, Korean public English education focused only on English grammar and reading comprehension, rather than speaking and listening, so even though these immigrants

¹⁸² Ibid., 20.

¹⁸³ Sadhna Diwan, "Limited English Proficiency, Social Network Characteristics, and Depressive Symptoms Among Older Immigrants," *The Journals of Gerontology* 63, no. 3 (2008): 185.

received public and advanced educations in Korea, their English proficiency is very limited. Moreover, generally speaking, Koreans' relatively shorter duration in the United States than other major ethnic groups has caused them to have less opportunities to develop their English proficiency, and this has resulted in them having limited access to the host culture. Their acculturation stress is aggravated when their limited English skills result in limited job opportunities, lowered income, and isolation from the mainstream culture.

Organista, Marin, and Chun aver that the acculturation stress of immigrants also increases with the presence of members of the same ethnic group who have better English proficiency.¹⁸⁴ When Korean American elderly immigrants see that other Korean American immigrants have greater linguistic competencies, they are likely to feel more stressed. Along with this inner ethnic-group factor, discrimination and social rejection caused by their limited English proficiency produce acculturation stress.

As pointed out by Kyoung Hag Lee and Dong Pil Yoon, limited English proficiency negatively affects one's physical, psychological, and social well-being and lowers one's sense of managing one's life.¹⁸⁵ In addition, Young-Me Lee notes that socially imposed burdens, such as "prejudice, micro-aggression, overt racism, and discrimination," aggravate physical health problems, and each of these factors is intensified by limited English proficiency.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, Young-Me Lee argues that this "newly acquired social disability" lowers self-esteem and status and authority in families,

¹⁸⁴ Organista, Marin, and Chun, *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States*, 119.

¹⁸⁵ Kyoung Hag Lee and Dong Pil Yoon, "Factors Influencing the General Well-Being of Low-Income Korean Immigrant Elders," *Social Work* 56, no. 3 (2011): 274.

¹⁸⁶ Lee, "Immigration Experience among Elderly Korean Immigrants," 125-26.

which are important for self-esteem.¹⁸⁷ Lee describes the negative social and psychological influences of limited English proficiency on Korean American elderly immigrants as follows:

The absence of proficiency to communicate in the dominant language can result in social isolation, a sense of insecurity, lack of access to important information provided by the mainstream media, an inability to make friends, and many other social and psychological losses ... Immigrants with a poor command of English can feel disabled when their inability to communicate leads to fear about being victimized or stigmatized, worry about interpersonal discomfort and embarrassment, or stress over other's reactions to their inability to communicate in the dominant language.¹⁸⁸

Lee also points out that the need for an interpreter causes three losses: a loss of control, a loss of a sense of security, and a loss of face.¹⁸⁹ Because in Korean culture losing face is seriously harmful to the elderly, they may experience more negative influences on their self-identities from limited English proficiency than other ethnic minority elderly immigrants.

As described by Jinsook in the previous chapter, in spite of her children's success in America and her own financial stability, her lack of English proficiency caused her to have a skeptical perspective on her 40-year life as an immigrant and to regret her decision to immigrate. Jinsook and Mija were likewise dependent on their children for translation services, and this may have had harmful effects on their self-esteems and agency. Because of their limited English proficiency, Jinsook, Minjung and Chulsoo also had few social relationships, with their relationships being confined to Korean-speaking Korean Americans.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 126.

b. Racism

Racism is, along with limited proficiency in English, another important factor contributing to acculturation stress and depression among Korean American elderly immigrants. Because of racial differences, Korean immigrants in the U.S. experience racist treatment, such as “being insulted, being made fun of, or being treated rudely and/or unfairly,” and experiencing these discriminative attitudes and behaviors adds to their acculturation stress and mental discomfort.¹⁹⁰ Besides more acculturation stress, experiencing racism causes immigrants to feel alienated and to resist adopting the host culture.¹⁹¹ Berry insists that immigrants who experience racism from host society members tend to alienate themselves from the host society and its culture because they want to avoid being rejected and discriminated against.¹⁹² As a result, immigrants who experience racism hold more strongly onto their own cultural heritage to protect themselves from a sense of marginalization, and even their descendants are encouraged to remain separate from the mainstream host culture.¹⁹³

A more harmful effect of racism on immigrants and their descendants is that experiencing racism makes them feel they are “unwanted, inferior, or unfairly stereotyped” minority groups in the host society and that they face the unsolvable

¹⁹⁰ Kunsook Song Bernstein et al., "Acculturation, Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms among Korean Immigrants in New York City," *Community Ment Health Journal* 47, no. 1 (2011): 25.

¹⁹¹ Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," 241.

¹⁹² Berry, "Contexts of Acculturation," 36.

¹⁹³ Schwartz et al., "Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research," 241.

challenge of “integrating themselves into a society that may never fully accept them.”¹⁹⁴ Particularly, immigrants who migrate as adults tend to be more exposed to acculturation stress and racism because of their stronger preference to cling to their culture of origin and their evident foreign accents and/or limited English proficiency.¹⁹⁵

In the previous chapter, in Minsoo’s story about experiencing racism, he was told by one of his customers, “You go back to your country,” and he was physically assaulted in his store. Before this event, because he had heard of many cases in which Korean American immigrants were discriminated against because of their race, skin color, and limited language proficiency, he had felt that he needed power in order to protect himself and his family and thus, he entered a sheriff’s academy. According to him, even though experiencing racism became a good motivation for him to achieve financial success and provide a good education for his children, this experience clearly had negative impacts on his identity: he would just keep silent when he was questioned about where he came from, instead of responding that he was from Korea. In contrast to Schwartz et al.’s argument that immigrants tend to cling to their original culture in order to reduce chances of encountering racial discrimination, by denying or concealing his national identity out of his feeling of shame as a Korean, by trying to fit in with the host culture (participating in his son’s baseball games, treating his son’s teammates and their family members to Cokes, and trying to communicate with them, even with his broken English), and by entering a sheriff’s academy, he actually tried to participate in and assimilate himself to American culture. In Soojin’s story, in spite of her husband’s successful academic achievements and career success, his colleague insulted him by calling his home city of Garden Grove,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 242.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 242-43.

“Trash Grove.”

These two participants’ experiences of feeling sad and tense in their daily lives as immigrants caused them to feel that their lives in the host society were not stable and safe, in spite of their achievements and legal statuses. Immigrants who are victims of racism have special pastoral care and counseling needs, because, as Kerstin Lueck and Machelles Wilson argue, these victims do not receive support and counseling from the host society or their own racial communities.¹⁹⁶

c. Acculturation Gap

Immigrant families also suffer from acculturation gaps. In immigrant families, parents and their children experience acculturation at different rates, and this difference leads to an increase in conflicts between family members and to more stress and adaptation problems for both parents and children.¹⁹⁷ Immigrant parents and their children experience “problematic distancing,” emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally; i.e., they feel different and isolated from each other, and they feel they do not have common ground for understanding one another.¹⁹⁸ This phenomenon is more noticeable over time and causes problems with communication, incongruence of cultural values, and more conflict in families.¹⁹⁹ As mentioned previously, because they immigrated as adults, immigrant parents are more exposed to the culture of origin. On the other hand, because of more exposure to American cultural norms through school, mass media, and greater

¹⁹⁶ Kerstin Lueck and Machelles Wilson, "Acculturative Stress in Asian Immigrants: The Impact of Social and Linguistic Factors," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 34 (2010): 55-56.

¹⁹⁷ Berry, "Acculturation: A Conceptual Overview," 14.

¹⁹⁸ Kim, Ahn, and Lam, "Theories and Research on Acculturation and Enculturation Experiences among Asian American Families," 28-29.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

interactions with their peers than their parents, immigrants' children are more in tune with the host culture and thus encounter cultural conflicts with their parents. This "dissonant acculturation" leads parents to adopt an extreme parenting pattern that imposes traditional cultural values on children.²⁰⁰ Based on Ryu and Vann, Kim, Ahn, and Lam describe examples of acculturation gaps in Asian immigrant families:

Already feeling a loss of power over their personal life from immigration-related stressors, Asian American parents, when their authority is also threatened, may demand unconditional obedience from their children. For example, parents may overemphasize the importance of excellent grades and view academic achievement as the only way to be successful in the United States. In turn, children may become overwhelmed by these pressures, as they are also attempting to fit in with their peers from the dominant culture, form their own ethnic identity, and try to show genuine respect for their parents' wishes. Consequently, children may experience a type of double bind where they feel rejected from both their Asian culture and the host culture. Parents may feel betrayed by their children who appear to be resistant to their influencing efforts.²⁰¹

As described by Kim, Ah, and Lam, to compensate for their threatened authority, parents tend to seek to maintain authority through authoritative and demanding parenting, which in the end leads them to feel rejected by their children. As a result, children suffer from inner conflicts between their parents' values and their peers' values.

In a study of cultural value gaps between Korean immigrant parents and their children in college, Annie J. Ahn, Bryan S. K. Kim, and Yong S. Park find conflicts around "family expectations, education and career, and dating and marriage concerns."²⁰² They summarize their findings as follows:

Specifically, the results indicated that respondents reported significantly lower

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 30.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Annie J. Ahn, Bryan S. K. Kim, and Yong S. Park, "Asian Cultural Values Gap, Cognitive Flexibility, Coping Strategies, and Parent-Child Conflicts Among Korean Americans," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 14, no. 4 (2008): 353.

adherence to Asian cultural values as compared with their perceptions of their fathers' and mothers' adherence to traditional Asian values. As hypothesized, the findings revealed that high levels of perceived father-child and mother-child Asian values gap were associated with increased intensity of perceived conflicts between the participants and their mothers and fathers, particularly in the area of dating and marriage.²⁰³

These results show, for example, that Korean American parents tend to try to control their children's decisions regarding dating and marriage, while the children seek to make their own decisions based on the dominant culture's values.²⁰⁴

As shown in Jinsook's story, because of her children's interracial-international marriages, her family went through very serious conflicts between her husband and her children, and, according to her, this was the toughest experience during her life as an immigrant. Her husband was strongly oriented to the Korean tradition that "blood" is very important in marriage, and, like Kim, Ahn, and Lam's findings above, he exerted a parenting pattern of demanding unconditional obedience from his children, specifically on marriage issues.

Moreover, conflicts between immigrant parents and children caused by acculturation gaps are aggravated by racism. Racism usually causes more "environmental and sociopolitical stressors" for each family member and negatively influences the family dynamics, which are more complex than those of non-immigrant families.²⁰⁵ Kim, Ahn, and Lam offer specific examples of harmful factors of racism for Asian American families:

Asian Americans are often scapegoated during times of economic recession and

²⁰³ Ibid., 359.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 360.

²⁰⁵ Kim, Ahn, and Lam, "Theories and Research on Acculturation and Enculturation Experiences among Asian American Families," 30.

social crisis. Asian Americans are subject to stereotypes and are excluded from school curricula, media representation, and popular culture. Furthermore, Asian Americans are at risk of the glass ceiling effect, receiving lower wages than European Americans who have equal or lower training and education. Moreover, there exist anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-Asian violence, and occupational segregations that increase the risk of psychological stress among Asian American families. These risk factors in turn can make it even more difficult for parents and children to cope with conflicts that may exist between them.²⁰⁶

Therefore, if stressors in a Korean American family caused by limited English, racism, and acculturation gaps are combined, it is likely that the effects of this combination aggravates the suffering of each individual in the family.

The combination of these three factors that cause suffering for immigrants is illustrated in Jinsook's story. Her husband exercised an authoritative parenting style, and their children made their own individual choices based on their enculturation in the dominant American culture. However, Jinsook's husband, as a former pharmacist in Korea and as an immigrant and small factory owner in the U.S., might have felt that his social status was degraded and that he had lost power over his own life from his lack of English skills, acculturation stress, not being able to control the marriage decisions of his children, not being familiar with the mainstream culture, and, even though not clearly mentioned in Jinsook's story, racism. All of these factors likely contributed to his authoritative and oppressive parenting, and, by exerting this type of parenting style, he felt he was still Korean.

In Mija's story, her two sons immigrated to the U.S. when they were a high school senior and an 8th grader. If their ages at the time of immigration are considered, the two sons likely experienced English proficiency problems, difficulties with making friends, limited academic achievement, and their own acculturation processes and stress in the

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

presence of their parents' high expectations. If they experienced racism in school, this might have exacerbated their emotional problems at school and at home.

d. Korean American Churches

Even though, in many research studies on Korean-American churches, the churches are described as useful resources for the emotional, cultural, social, and spiritual well-being of Korean-American immigrants, some researchers propose that these churches are also a significant cause of the stress experienced by these immigrants. First of all, a large percentage of Korean American elderly immigrants became Christian after immigrating to the United States, in spite of their previous non-Christian religious backgrounds, and they became involved in church activities as a means of “sharing language, culture, social belonging, and psychological comfort.”²⁰⁷ Their religious involvement provides them with “an unusually high degree of ethnic identity, social identity, and sense of empowerment” and the feeling of being understood by and understanding other Koreans who share similar experiences of discrimination.²⁰⁸

In comparison to other Asian immigrant groups, in dealing with issues of their immigrant lives, Korean American elderly immigrants have a stronger tendency to rely on ethnic Christian communities and to seek God's help with those things they cannot receive from U.S. social service systems because of linguistic and cultural obstacles.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Young-Me Lee and Karyn Holm, "Stressors Related to Depression among Elderly Korean Immigrants," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 33 (2012): 56.

²⁰⁸ Mark H. Chae and Pamela F. Foley, "Relationship of Ethnic Identity, Acculturation, and Psychological Well-Being Among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 88 (2010): 472.

²⁰⁹ Ahn, Kim, and Park, "Asian Cultural Values Gap, Cognitive Flexibility, Coping Strategies, and Parent-Child Conflicts Among Korean Americans," 354.

Researchers report that Korean American church members tend to suffer from less depression than non-Christian Korean American immigrants and, particularly, the church activities of Christian Korean American elderly immigrants lessen their depressive feelings.²¹⁰

Many researchers report that the religiosity or spirituality of elderly people in general have positive effects on the life satisfaction and happiness of elderly people because their spirituality enables them to manage various issues related to their aging processes, such as issues of daily life, changes due to aging, losses, and, ultimately, death.²¹¹ In addition to aging issues, Korean-American elderly Christians have to manage immigration issues, such as linguistic, cultural, and existential struggles. These aging-immigration concerns lead them to seek more intense social and emotional support, and Korean American churches have been one of the most important resources for them.²¹² Particularly when Korean American immigrants go through their acculturation period, Korean-American churches play important roles by providing spiritual, emotional, cultural, and social support.²¹³ In this regard, many Korean-American churches provide beneficial services for their members.

However, Ben C. H. Kuo asserts that, if religion or spirituality is used as a tool of simple avoidance from the stress caused by immigration and acculturation, the

²¹⁰ Park and Bernstein, "Depression and Korean American Immigrants," 15.

²¹¹ Lee and Yoon, "Factors Influencing the General Well-Being of Low-Income Korean Immigrant Elders," 271.

²¹² Ibid., 277.

²¹³ Park and Bernstein, "Depression and Korean American Immigrants," 14.

involvement of religion or spirituality can be disadvantageous to immigrants.²¹⁴ Gordon W. Allport's notion is a helpful psychological lens for understanding this disadvantageous aspect of religion. Allport insists that there are two different religious motivations—intrinsic and extrinsic—and that people belong to one point on “a continuum ranging from the type of religious sentiment that has only instrumental or extrinsic significance in a life to the type of sentiment that is itself a major motive in life, and thus has intrinsic value.”²¹⁵ In his category of extrinsic motivation, Christianity is “something to *use*, but not to *live*” and exists “to provide a super-sanction for one's own formula for living.”²¹⁶ Using a theological concept, he describes the extrinsically religious person as a person who “turns to God, but does not turn away from self.”²¹⁷

On the other hand, intrinsic religion is “a hunger for, and a commitment to, an ideal unification of one's life, but always under a unifying conception of the nature of all existence.”²¹⁸ Allport regards intrinsic religion as providing better therapeutic effects for people, even though they do not seek these effects. In short, a person with an intrinsic orientation emphasizes living his/her own religion, while people with extrinsic orientations want to “use religion for their own ends,” and their values are “instrumental and utilitarian” in that they seek “security and solace, sociability and distraction, status

²¹⁴ Ben C.H. Kuo, "Coping, Acculturation, and Psychological Adaptation among Migrants: A Theoretical and Empirical Review and Synthesis of the Literature," *Health Psychology & Behavioural Medicine* 2, no. 1 (2014): 23.

²¹⁵ Gordon W. Allport, "Behavioral Science, Religion, and Mental Health," *Journal of Religion and Health* 2, no. 3 (1963): 193.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 194.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 195.

and self-justification.”²¹⁹

In their research on the relationship between religious motivation and depressive symptoms among Korean immigrants, Hae-Seong Park et al. support Allport’s viewpoint. Interviewing 95 Korean immigrants from four different Korean-American churches in a southeastern state, they found that depressive symptoms were negatively related to intrinsic religious motivation, while an extrinsic motivation was positively related to depression.²²⁰ They argue that this research finding is very important for Korean immigrants because church involvement is a way of life for many of them, and they suggest that mental health professionals guide depressive Korean-American clients to seek the meaning of their immigration through intrinsic religious motivation:

Stressful life events such as loneliness, unemployment, loss of status, lack of social support and belonging in the immigrant’s life can trigger a sense of hopelessness and helplessness which can create a spiritual crisis. Exploration of intrinsic religious belief as a way to search for the meaning of their immigrant existence can be effective in assisting depressive Korean clients.²²¹

Even though some Korean immigrants initially enter into Christian faith to satisfy extrinsic needs, their intrinsic motivation can be enhanced, thus, their Christian faith needs to focus on seeking the meaning of their immigrant living.²²² Jaesang Lyu summarizes the role of the Christian faith of Korean immigrants as follows:

The themes of immigration, identity, and religion come together and their Christian faith becomes central in the process of identity development and coping

²¹⁹ Gordon W. Allport and J. Michael Ross, "Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1967): 434.

²²⁰ Hae-Seong Park et al., "Relationship between Intrinsic-Extrinsic Religious Orientation and Depressive Symptoms in Korean Americans," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1998): 322.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Jaesang Lyu, "Marginality and Coping: A Communal Contextual Narrative Approach to Pastoral Care with Korean American Christians" (PhD. diss., University of Denver, 2009), 61.

with stress. Many people find that religion fills the void of their life as immigrants, helping them search for answers to the constant question of why I live the way I live in this new land.²²³

With the stress of acculturation and a lack of self-agency, Korean immigrants may internalize the extrinsic values of Christian faith without having a chance to think about the theological meaning of their immigrant lives and all of their challenges.²²⁴

As mentioned in Soojin's story, she witnessed that Korean American churches tended to give elder and deacon/ness titles to their members much too easily because of the extrinsic motivation of the members, and this resulted in various problems in Korean-American churches. Most Korean Americans have blue-collar jobs and small businesses, and this causes them to have lower self-esteem and more extrinsic motivations for their Christian faith, such as compensation for their losses of dignity, honor, social status, and limited opportunities to speak their own language and enjoy their own foods without considering other American people. Based on these strong extrinsic needs, their motivation for having Christian faith focuses on seeking honor by gaining status in their churches, such as positions as elders and deacons or deaconesses, and this extrinsic motivation sometimes causes various forms of conflicts in churches.

Chulsoo also shared that he got the impression that Korean immigrant Christians tend to go to church out of loneliness and to gain titles without engaging in spiritual and religious disciplines. In Mija's story, her two sons do not go to church anymore because they watched something negative happen in Korean-American churches. The examples in Minsoo's story are representatively negative examples of what often happens in Korean American churches. Minsoo was appointed as the chairperson of the building committee

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

in a church totally new to him because of just one reason: he was rich. The example of the Korean evangelist in his story reveals that some Korean American Christians maintain their Christian faith despite a lack of intrinsic needs and motivation. Since Minsoo himself began to have a real Christian faith after receiving pastoral care from the pastors of his current church after his daughter's sudden death, he seems to have developed his Christian faith from being extrinsically motivated to being intrinsically motivated. Thus, even though it is quite certain there are Korean-American church members who participate in church activities out of extrinsic motivations, there is still the possibility that their initial extrinsic Christian faith can change and they can form an intrinsic religion, such as living their Christian faith in their immigrant lives.

3. Ageism

The term, *ageism*, was coined by Robert Butler in 1969, and this dissertation defines *ageism* according to his original and developed definitions, which will be given below. Ageism has various social and psychological sources, such as the realities of modernity, fear of aging, materialism, and fear of diseases. This section also deals with issues of the unconscious, the victimization of both elderly people and ageists, and the bipolar nature of ageism. Four typologies developed by a Swedish scholar, Lars Tornstam, represent four different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes toward aging and elderly people. Although many elderly people are negatively influenced by ageism, they can sustain positive self-identities through their defensive mechanisms. One of these mechanisms is "identity assimilation," which means that elderly people control the information process and accept only information that affirms their own positive selves. In comparison, another response to aging and ageism, "identity accommodation," leads the

elderly to accommodate to age-related changes, but also to despair over these changes.

a. Definition

According to Valerie Braithwaite, the term, *ageism*, was first coined by Robert Butler in 1969, who defined ageism as “systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old.”²²⁵ According to Jody A. Wilkinson and Kenneth F. Ferraro, Butler further developed his definition of *ageism* later, and they summarize his developed definition of ageism as follows:

(1) prejudicial attitudes toward older persons, old age, and the aging process, which includes attitudes held by older adults themselves; (2) discriminatory practices against older people; and (3) institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older adults, reduce their opportunity for life satisfaction, and undermine their personal dignity.²²⁶

In Butler’s developed definition, *ageism* usually means negative attitudes toward elderly people held by younger people, but, at the same time, they could be held toward older adults by older adults themselves. Wilkinson and Kenneth describe ageism as consisting of interrelated factors, including attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, institutional policies, and practices that enhance one another.²²⁷ The core problem with this definition, as Jeff Greenberg, Jeff Schimel, and Andy Martens point out, is that the negative factors are activated toward an individual based only on that person’s older age.²²⁸

As cited in Wilkinson and Ferraro, Butler points out that a detrimental aspect of

²²⁵ Valerie Braithwaite, "Reducing Ageism," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 311.

²²⁶ Jody A. Wilkinson and Kenneth F. Ferraro, "Thirty Years of Ageism Research," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 339.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Jeff Greenberg, Jeff Schimel, and Andy Martens, "Ageism: Denying the Face of the Future," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 27.

ageism is to regard a natural process (aging) as a social problem.²²⁹ However, while *ageism* usually means negative attitudes and prejudice against older adults, Wilkinson and Ferraro note that ageism can also include positive prejudice or discrimination in favor of elderly people, although this occurs only in a limited manner, such as with Medicare.²³⁰ Therefore, *ageism* mainly means negative prejudice and discrimination toward elderly people on both individual and social levels, but it also includes some limited positive discrimination.²³¹

b. The Sources of Ageism

Modernity

Nelson maintains that ageism became institutionalized through two developments of civilization: the advent of the printing press and the industrial revolution.²³² According to him, printed materials eliminated elderly people's roles as transmitters of traditions, stories, and information by making it possible for people to obtain more detailed information about their cultures, traditions, and histories from print materials than from human transmitters.²³³ As a result of the development of the printing press, the authority of elderly people as keepers of wisdom and knowledge has been considerably reduced, thus resulting in the loss of domestic and social status for elderly people.

The second significant factor of modernity is the industrial revolution. Nelson

²²⁹ Wilkinson and Ferraro, "Thirty Years of Ageism Research," 339.

²³⁰ Ibid., 340.

²³¹ Thomas M. Hess, "Attitudes toward Aging and Their Effects on Behavior," in *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, eds. James E. Birren, K. Warner Schaie, Ronald P. Abeles, Margaret Gatz, and Timothy A. Salthouse (Boston: Elsevier Academic Press, 2006), 384.

²³² Todd D. Nelson, "Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self," *Journal of Social Issues* 61, no. 2 (2005): 208.

²³³ Ibid.

points out that industrialization created a greater demand for mobility and physical strength in jobs, which led to fewer job opportunities for elderly people.²³⁴ Nelson also mentions that human life expectancy considerably increased after the industrial revolution because of advances in medicine, but society was not ready to handle the increased number of elderly people.²³⁵ As a result of society's lack of preparedness for major change, elderly people began to be negatively stereotyped and to be viewed as social burdens.²³⁶

The Fear of Aging

As cited in Braithwaite, Butler argues that ageism comes from a fear of aging.²³⁷ Greenberg, Schimel, and Martens point out that elderly people, by their very presence, remind the younger generation of their undesirable future, such as "the prospects of diminishing beauty, health, sensation, and, ultimately, death."²³⁸ As a result, the younger generation develops attitudes toward elderly people that are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally negative. These attitudes often further develop into stereotypes about all elderly people.

According to Greenberg, Schimel, and Martens, Ernest Becker's terror management theory proposes that young adults tend to regard elderly people as out-group members who threaten their psychological security and comfort, and this psychological threat then serves as a major contributor to prejudice and discrimination against the

²³⁴ Ibid., 208-09.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Braithwaite, "Reducing Ageism," 326.

²³⁸ Greenberg, Schimel, and Martens, "Ageism: Denying the Face of the Future," 29.

elderly people.²³⁹ Becker thinks that the terror management mechanism is rooted in a cultural background in which people want to deny the possibility of their own deaths, and since aging is the precursor to death, this leads to negative beliefs and attitudes about, and actions toward, older adults:

In *The Denial of Death* (1973), Becker concluded that this existential paradox—being driven to live but knowing the only certainty is death—creates the potential for paralyzing terror, a potential we carry with us at all times. The way we control or manage this potential for terror is by using culturally based mechanisms to deny death. The core of death denial, or what we refer to as terror management, is a cultural worldview that allows individuals who are socialized within a given culture to view reality as stable, meaningful, and permanent.²⁴⁰

Related to Becker's argument, Nelson insists that their terror management strategy allows younger people to avoid confronting "the reality that they too will eventually become part of that out-group" and to convince themselves that such a fate is not in their future, thus relieving their anxiety about death and dying.²⁴¹

Materialism

Cruikshank maintains that ageism is based on materialism, which puts an emphasis on finances and physical health.²⁴² She states that ageists think elderly people threaten the younger generation economically, and they ignore elderly people's material and non-material contributions to their families, friends, and communities, such as taking care of spouses and grandchildren.²⁴³

Another materialistic aspect of ageism is its focus on physical health. Cruikshank

²³⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 32.

²⁴¹ Nelson, "Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self," 214-15.

²⁴² Margaret Cruikshank, *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2009), 25, 37.

²⁴³ Ibid., 25-26, 37.

criticizes ageism in that it pays no attention to elderly people's meaningful social and religious roles, overlooking the fact that elderly people's declining physical health is only one aspect of aging.²⁴⁴ She points out that this overemphasis on bodily decline leads ageists to define aging solely on the basis of physical loss, thereby denying the existence of potentially valuable societal roles and contributions and marginalizing elderly people.²⁴⁵ Moreover, as she points out, overemphasizing physical health leads to focusing on the aging process from only a medical perspective, while "the medicalization of aging" creates the perception that only by being sick can older adults obtain any element of social status in an ageist society.²⁴⁶ Cruikshank insists that this approach evaluates aging solely in terms of monetary value and relegates elderly people to the role of being targets for medical businesses.²⁴⁷

Fear of Disease

Lesley A. Duncan and Mark Schaller find a source of ageism in the mechanism of avoiding disease and fear of the transmission of infectious diseases.²⁴⁸ They argue that people who feel vulnerable and are concerned about the transmission of infectious diseases tend to have negative attitudes toward elderly people, regarding elderly people as disease carriers based on their external and physical changes and weakened immune systems.²⁴⁹ Duncan and Schaller insist that this mechanism is activated even when

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 37.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 38.

²⁴⁸ Lesley A. Duncan and Mark Schaller, "Prejudicial Attitudes Toward Older Adults May Be Exaggerated When People Feel Vulnerable to Infectious Disease: Evidence and Implications" *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 9, no. 1 (2009): 97.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 108-09.

beliefs about older adults are often pretty positive and that the mechanism operates not only in America but also in Asian countries, where older adults are respected and there are strong values of filial piety.²⁵⁰

c. The Characteristics of Ageism

The Unconscious

As cited by Todd D. Nelson, Barrow and Smith refer to ageism as a “third ism” which is of less interest to researchers than racism and sexism because it is so deeply internalized in American culture that researchers do not recognize its existence or its negative influences on society.²⁵¹ According to Braithwaite, Dovidio and Gaertner state that the worst aspect of ageism is that it is so unconscious it cannot be recognized by people.²⁵² Kite and Wagner call the unconscious process of ageism “automatic ageism,” meaning that both older and younger adults connect negative images to elderly people automatically.²⁵³ Amy J. C. Cuddy and Susan T. Fiske insist that ageism is so unconscious in America it is unopposed and undetected.²⁵⁴ Nelson points out that categorization based on race, gender, and age is a fundamentally deep-rooted view, and this categorization is called “primitive or automatic” by many researchers.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 98.

²⁵¹ Todd D. Nelson, ed. *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), ix.

²⁵² Braithwaite, "Reducing Ageism," 327.

²⁵³ Mary E. Kite and Lisa Smith Wagner, "Attitudes toward Older Adults," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 130.

²⁵⁴ Amy J. C. Cuddy and Susan T. Fiske, "Doddering but Dear: Content, and Function in Stereotyping of Older Persons," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 3.

²⁵⁵ Nelson, "Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self," 207.

Victimization of Both the Elderly and Ageists

Nelson insists that, unlike racism and sexism, ageism eventually causes its young adherents to become its victims, because they will someday join the group of elderly people.²⁵⁶ As Cruikshank points out, the commonality among ageism, racism, and sexism is to discriminate against people based on their appearance.²⁵⁷ However, what differentiates ageism from the two other forms of discrimination is that racism and sexism victimize outgroup members, while ageism victimizes both elderly people and the ageists themselves.²⁵⁸ Cuddy and Fiske also claim that discrimination based on age is unique because people usually do not shift ingroup/outgroup membership in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or religious background, but young ageists will eventually join the group against which they have discriminated.²⁵⁹

Bipolar Ageism

Kevin E. McHugh calls disguised positive attitudes toward elderly people “bipolar ageism.” He argues that positive concepts about aging, such as “continuity, coherence, integrity, individuation, activity, agelessness and successful ageing,” are merely used as alternatives to negative attitudes about elderly people and aging. He criticizes this approach as “disguised ageism” (or “bipolar ageism”) since it presupposes that aging is bad and youthfulness is good; these positive terms thus imply a masked

²⁵⁶ Nelson, *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, x.

²⁵⁷ Cruikshank, *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*, 140.

²⁵⁸ Nelson, *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, x.

²⁵⁹ Cuddy and Fiske, "Doddering but Dear: Content, and Function in Stereotyping of Older Persons," 3.

rejection of the fact that all humans are aging.²⁶⁰ He also mentions that these externally positive concepts prevent people from accepting the negative aspects of aging and causes them to experience conflicts with the contradictory aspects of aging.²⁶¹ He describes this aspect of bipolar ageism as follows:

Positive stereotypes centered on anti-ageing, agelessness and successful ageing stand in dialectic relation with enduring negative stereotypes of old age as dependence, decay and disease. Unable to hold the opposite poles in creative tension – unable to accept the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of ageing – we vacillate between positive and negative stereotypes, both of which are imbued with strains of ageism.²⁶²

McHugh argues that this bipolar ageism pushes people to have impossible ideals about aging, such as maintaining health as if they were much younger, and to regard health as the foundation and goal of successful aging rather than the means to successful aging.²⁶³ Kane, Green, and Jacobs call this emphasis on health for successful aging a newer version of ageism, and this forces elderly people to maximize their health in order to avoid becoming a social burden.²⁶⁴ Because of this excessive emphasis on health, McHugh insists, successful aging becomes “a bankrupt ideal that cannot accommodate the realities of decline and death.”²⁶⁵ He also points out that this bipolar ageism conceals anxiety about the possibility of growing weaker and results in externalized projection in

²⁶⁰ Kevin E. McHugh, "Three Faces of Ageism: Society, Image and Place," *Ageing & Society* 23 (2003): 180.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid., 180-81.

²⁶⁴ Michael N. Kane, Diane L. Green, and Robin J. Jacobs, "Pastoral Care Professionals in Health and Mental Health Care: Recognizing Classic and Newer Versions of Ageism," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 65, no. 4 (2011): 1.

²⁶⁵ McHugh, "Three Faces of Ageism: Society, Image and Place," 180-81.

the form of condescension and revulsion toward older adults.²⁶⁶

Kane, Green, and Jacobs argue that even health, mental health, and pastoral care professionals may have bipolar ageism and show their negative attitudes toward elderly people through externally considerate communication styles, such as infantilizing the elderly by using “elder-speak” (high pitched and loud communication) and patronizing language, such as “Dear,” “Honey,” or “Sweetie.”²⁶⁷ A negative impact of this type communication is that some elderly people who receive patronizing or infantilizing messages from professionals may internalize that they deserve the messages and regard them as a verdict of professionals and experts about them.²⁶⁸ Nelson points out that this “overaccommodation” by professionals debilitates self-esteem and the performance of elderly persons.²⁶⁹

As referenced in McHugh, Andrews calls this bipolar ageism “a pretence and form of self-hatred” which prevents elderly people from developing positive viewpoints about themselves.²⁷⁰ McHugh suggests that the core point of Andrews’ perspective on bipolar ageism is that the disguised positive aspects of aging ignore the most treasurable possessions of elderly people, such as “the years they have lived... the selves they have evolved from, and the selves they are becoming.”²⁷¹ McHugh also insists that embracing the tension between continuity and change in the aging process is a way of overcoming

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Kane, Green, and Jacobs, "Pastoral Care Professionals in Health and Mental Health Care: Recognizing Classic and Newer Versions of Ageism," 2.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Nelson, "Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self," 211.

²⁷⁰ McHugh, "Three Faces of Ageism: Society, Image and Place," 181.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

bipolar ageism, since positive images of aging can be ageist even as they stimulate older adults to stay in good health, to be independent, and to be active.²⁷²

4. Four Typologies of Attitudes toward Aging and Elderly People

Mary E. Kite and Lisa Smith Wagner follow Eagly and Chaiken's model that divides ageism into three categories: affective (prejudice), cognitive (stereotyping), and behavioral (stigmatizing). They describe these as "an affective component, represented by feelings that one has toward older individuals; a cognitive component, represented by beliefs or stereotypes about elderly people; and a behavioral component, represented by behavior or behavioral intentions toward older adults."²⁷³ Braithwaite describes the harmfulness of these three aspects of ageism as follows: stereotypes are harmful because they are accepted as social truth without question and are not challenged by members of society; prejudice is detrimental because the emotional aspects of prejudice hinder reasonable judgments and harmonious social relationships; and stigmatizing behaviors are damaging because they destroy older adults' self-identity.²⁷⁴

Based on these three categories of ageism, in 2002, Lars Tornstam studied a random sample of 3,000 Swedes between the ages of 15 and 85 using a postal survey in order to devise a new ageism typology, while focusing on a combination of the cognitive and behavioral disposition components.²⁷⁵ He identified four types of ageism: the Consistently Negative, the Pitying Positive, the No Fuzz, and the Consistently Positive.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Kite and Wagner, "Attitudes toward Older Adults," 130-31.

²⁷⁴ Braithwaite, "Reducing Ageism," 311.

²⁷⁵ Lars Tornstam, "The Complexity of Ageism: A Proposed Typology," *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 1, no. 1 (2006): 46.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 43.

Type 1, the Consistently Negative, describes respondents who already had negative images of older adults and who combined these images with their more negative images of elderly people's social roles.²⁷⁷ Tornstam describes Type 2, the Pitying Positive, as exhibiting "condescending pity."²⁷⁸ According to Tornstam, the Norwegian philosopher Harald Ofstad insists that society has a conflicted value system split between a modern positive view of productivity, efficiency, and independence, and a traditional positive view of elderly people and wisdom.²⁷⁹ To solve this social conceptual conflict, society chooses to hide its contempt for elderly people and to combine that contempt with respect for the elderly. Thus, Tornstam calls this a "Pitying Positive" attitude, referring to people with "a hidden or disguised contempt for weakness," and he borrows Kalish's term, "The New Ageism," to describe them.²⁸⁰

Type 3, the No Fuzz, consists of people who have a positive view of elderly people and therefore, they do not give them special attention because they think elderly people do not need special attention or help.²⁸¹ Tornstam interprets this type of ageism as "a feeling of rivalry or competition with these well-to-do elderly" and characterizes it as "jealously negative."²⁸² People representing Type 4, the Consistently Positive, have accurate or positively biased knowledge about elderly people and aging, together with positive perspectives on elderly people's social participation.²⁸³

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 54.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 55.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 56.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., 54.

5. The Effects of Ageism on Elderly People

As cited in Hess, Steele and his colleagues argue that negative stereotypes about a group have damaging effects on the behaviors of the group's members when those individuals are put in the situation of supporting those stereotypes.²⁸⁴ Sarit A. Golub, Allan Filipowicz, and Ellen J. Langer assert that elderly people tend to internalize ageist attitudes and perspectives, and older adults' abilities and willingness to have relationships with those in the younger generation are negatively affected by this internalized ageism.²⁸⁵ According to Cruikshank, this internalized ageism prevents elderly people from accurately assessing their own strengths and leads them to accept without examination the negative assessments made of them by ageists.²⁸⁶ Thus, Cruikshank argues that elderly people perpetuate ageist stereotypes through their language and behaviors and that internalized ageism affects elderly people's health and performance, e.g., internalized ageism negatively affects cardiovascular function and increases the shakiness of handwriting.²⁸⁷

Hess maintains that elderly people might become more dependent because of their internalized ageism, behaving in accordance with ageist attitudes in order to promote social interactions, such as pretending to be younger than their physical age.²⁸⁸ Hess also mentions that ageist behavior, such as condescension, aggravates "loss of self-esteem, lowered motivation and confidence in ability, reduced participation in activities,

²⁸⁴ Hess, "Attitudes toward Aging and Their Effects on Behavior," 393-94.

²⁸⁵ Sarit A. Golub, Allan Filipowicz, and Ellen J. Langer, "Acting Your Age " in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 277.

²⁸⁶ Cruikshank, *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*, 153.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 153-55.

²⁸⁸ Hess, "Attitudes toward Aging and Their Effects on Behavior," 387.

and loss of control” in older adults.²⁸⁹ In addition, Nelson points out that treating an elderly person as a baby, such as talking in the same way one talks to a baby by using a louder voice, exaggerated intonation, higher pitch, and simple sentences, can have negative effects on older adults. He says,

Infantilization creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in that older people come to accept and believe that they are no longer independent, ... The acceptance of such a role and the loss of self-esteem (that one derives from feeling like a useful, valued member of society) in an older individual occurs gradually over his/her life, as he/she is continually exposed to society’s subtle and not-so-subtle infantilization of older people.²⁹⁰

According to Nelson, elderly people show mixed responses to this kind of infantilizing.

Those with lower functional abilities tend to prefer the baby talk because they feel soothed and nurtured by it. On the other hand, older adults who have higher cognitive and social functioning feel disrespected and humiliated by such talk.²⁹¹

One research partner, Mija, mentioned that she thought elderly people in her church should quit the choir and other volunteer positions, giving up their power, and that younger people should take over those positions. Her remark shows how internalized ageism works in the cognition of elderly people, changing their attitudes toward themselves and limiting them, without any critique of socially imposed prejudices. Mija accepted an ageist perspective on aging and elderly people and actually insisted that ageist beliefs and attitudes should be institutionalized in her church.

Another research partner, Minjung, shared that she did not want to be treated like

²⁸⁹ Susan Krauss Whitbourne and Joel R. Sneed, "The Paradox of Well-Being, Identity Processes, and Stereotype Threat: Ageism and Its Potential Relationships to the Self in Later Life," in *Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice against Older Persons*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 264.

²⁹⁰ Nelson, "Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self," 209-10.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

other elderly people because she was interested in social issues like young people were and had more passion than younger people. She also commented that she did not feel happy about being called “elderly.” Minjung’s internalized ageism reflected the viewpoints of an ageist society and, at the same time, a bipolar ageism that emphasizes positive concepts about aging, such as activeness, agelessness, and successful aging. Thus, Minjung exposed her concept of aging that elderly people should live lives similar to young people’s.

Cruikshank argues that ageism drives elderly people to lead busy lives in order to avoid confronting their vulnerability and to give the impression that their vulnerability is under control.²⁹² However, she points out that this is just an illusion they cannot sustain, and it leads people to deny their various age-related changes.²⁹³ Susan Krauss Whitbourne and Joel R. Sneed note that it is paradoxical for ageism to push elderly people to live busy lives when an ageist society deprives them of work opportunities, thus making it hard for them to sustain identities as productive members of society.²⁹⁴

6. Strategies of Elderly People for Dealing with Ageism

Whitbourne and Sneed argue that, although some elderly people are negatively influenced by ageism, the majority achieve and maintain a positive sense of well-being; Mroczek and Kolarz called this subjective experience of welfare a “paradox of well-being.”²⁹⁵ It is a paradox because elderly people achieve positive self-esteem and enhanced abilities to cope with negative life events despite many negative portrayals of

²⁹² Cruikshank, *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*, 166.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Whitbourne and Sneed, "The Paradox of Well-Being, Identity Processes, and Stereotype Threat: Ageism and Its Potential Relationships to the Self in Later Life," 250.

aging. The negative influences of ageism on elderly people include internalized ageism and declining performance abilities in everyday life.²⁹⁶ From the perspective of personality theories concerning aging and the sense of self, Whitbourne and Sneed argue that this paradox of well-being is possible because of four characteristics of elderly people:

The first is a mature set of defense mechanisms or coping abilities. The second is the ability to select emotionally rewarding social partners. The third proposed mechanism involves accommodation of goals by older adults in the face of actual and impending age-related changes. The last, ... , is the use of processes of interpreting experiences in which information consistent with present (positive) views of the self is preserved.²⁹⁷

As described in the fourth strategy, sustaining a positive perspective on the self is very important in dealing with the aging process and ageism because, as Whitbourne and Sneed point out, sustaining a positive identity is the most important challenge faced during the aging process. Ageism undermines elderly people's positive sense of self, and this is strongly connected with their well-being.²⁹⁸ Hess likewise proposes that it is necessary for all adults to develop more positive self-concepts for their well-being, and this is particularly true for elderly people.²⁹⁹

Identity process theory proposes two types of strategies for dealing with the aging process and ageism: identity assimilation and identity accommodation.

a. Identity Assimilation

Whitbourne and Sneed argue that identity assimilation is a self-protective strategy that shields the individual from realizing a weakness in the self and helps the individual

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 247.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 251.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 254.

²⁹⁹ Hess, "Attitudes toward Aging and Their Effects on Behavior," 391.

increase self-respect despite various losses and negative experiences of ageism. This strategy allows individuals to focus on the positive aspects of their lives and their accomplishments, thus viewing themselves as healthy.³⁰⁰ Whitbourne and Sneed describe the characteristics of identity assimilation as consisting of a series of defensive processes designed to perpetuate a positive sense of self. These processes prevent negative information from entering awareness and thereby threatening identity. Therefore, these processes may lead individuals to refuse to take responsibility for their flaws and to maintain erroneous beliefs about themselves, even in the face of contradictory evidence, and they may also avoid self-reflection which could lead to uncomfortable realizations about the effects of aging in their own lives.³⁰¹ Identity assimilation tends to distort information about the self, which gives elderly people a false sense of peace and comfort. Thus, elderly people interpret their own actions and experiences in ways that preserve and sustain a positive view of the self.

However, identity assimilation also has a negative effect on elderly people. Whitbourne and Sneed assert that engaging in identity assimilation causes elderly people to experience “social isolation, exhaustion from constantly defending against reality, and failure to engage in age-related compensatory activities.”³⁰² In addition, they summarize Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon’s notion of the damaging characteristics of identity assimilation:

- (1) Individuals tend to take credit for their successes and deny responsibility for their failures;
- (2) they will inhibit performance or undermine their own chances

³⁰⁰ Whitbourne and Sneed, "The Paradox of Well-Being, Identity Processes, and Stereotype Threat: Ageism and Its Potential Relationships to the Self in Later Life," 256, 263.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 261.

³⁰² Ibid., 263.

for success (i.e., self-handicap) if they are able to conjure up external attributions to explain their failure; (3) when self-esteem in a particular domain is threatened, people compensate by overly valuing their skills in an unrelated domain; (4) when individuals fail at a task that is important to them, they overestimate how many others will also fail; conversely, when they succeed, they underestimate how many others will succeed; (5) people prefer to compare themselves to others who perform worse than they do on dimensions that are important to them (e.g., downward social comparisons); and (6) when research participants are outperformed by confederates on tasks that are personally relevant (identity salient), they subsequently downplay or minimize the importance of that domain to their self-concept.³⁰³

Whitbourne and Sneed also argue that these characteristics interfere with the formation of meaningful and important relationships with others, such as family and friends.³⁰⁴

b. Identity Accommodation

Whitbourne and Sneed define elderly people's identity accommodation as an unquestioning internalization of ageist attitudes and prejudices and the aligning of cognition and behaviors in accordance with those prejudices.³⁰⁵ They call this uncritical acceptance of ageist opinions an overreaction to, over-generalization of, and over-accommodation to the negative changes involved in the aging process.³⁰⁶ Because of this excessive accommodation, elderly people tend to have negative expectations about their futures and to think their lives will decline regardless of how much they try to take compensatory actions; therefore, they actually experience more physical and cognitive declines than are expected.³⁰⁷

According to Whitbourne and Sneed, identity accommodation stems from having "unstable and incoherent identities" that cause elderly people to be easily influenced by

³⁰³ Ibid., 258.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 263.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

new age-related challenges.³⁰⁸ They state, “For accommodators, stereotyped notions of old age provide a concrete set of external self-referents, and they adopt these stereotypes because they lack the internal identity structure that enables negotiating these challenges.”³⁰⁹ They argue that elderly people practicing identity accommodation lack self-confidence and positive self-esteem, and, in the absence of self-reflection, they avoid confronting their self-doubts and low self-esteem by seeking confirmatory information about themselves, because “they continually recognize their own limitations and lack of integration.”³¹⁰

As Butler defines it, ageism is discrimination against elderly people based on age, together with damaging cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes toward elderly people in both individual and social dimensions. Modernity brought about the advent of ageism because elderly people lost their valued role of transmitting traditions, stories, and information following the development of the printing press. The industrial revolution of the modern age also caused elderly people to be marginalized in the labor market due to their physical decline. The younger generation has negative attitudes toward elderly people because the elderly serve as reminders of their future aging and ultimate deaths. Fear of disease is an unnoticed source of ageism. Duncan and Schaller point out that people who have a fear of transmission of infectious diseases tend to hold negative attitudes toward elderly people. In addition, our materialistic culture does not pay attention to elderly people’s emotional and spiritual contributions to their families, communities, and societies because it emphasizes only materialism and economic value.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 261.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 263.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 261.

Ageism is so unconscious that both elderly and younger adults automatically connect negative images with elderly people. Ageism ultimately makes victims of both elderly and younger people who hold ageist beliefs because everyone eventually grows old. There are many positive images of aging and elderly people, but these images still presuppose that aging is undesirable, thus revealing the phenomenon of bipolar ageism.

The four typologies of attitudes toward aging and elderly people delineate the cognitive and behavioral aspects of ageism, including negative images, condescension, competition, and unvarying positivity. Even with positive and exact information about aging, there is no guarantee that they will lead to positive behaviors toward elderly people. There is also no guarantee of positive perceptions of aging and the elderly even when people do engage in positive behaviors toward elderly people.

Elderly people are deeply influenced by ageism, which leads them to underrate their strengths and to increase their dependence. Internalized ageism causes an increase in health problems and drives elderly people to lead busy lives to defend against vulnerability. However, they can sustain positive self-identities through identity assimilation processes in which they confirm their positive self-images, although there is some risk of information distortion and isolation of elderly people from social interrelationships. In addition, identity accommodation can result in depression and despair as it leads elderly people to uncritically accept ageist attitudes and prejudices. McHugh points out that overcoming ageism requires elderly people to accept the tension between contradictory aspects of ongoing age-related changes and their accompanying changes in identity.

B. Spiritual Dimensions of Despair

In this section, I interpret my research partners' experiences of despair through the lens of Kierkegaard's perspective on despair and provide a preliminary description of what should be done to care for this despair. As described in the introduction, Kierkegaard sees a human being as a self that is "composed of infinitude and finitude" and is a conscious synthesis between infinitude and finitude.³¹¹ To him, the task of the human self is "to become itself."³¹² Gregory R. Beabout correctly describes Kierkegaard's way of becoming oneself as engaging in "self-reflective activities," such as "I talk to myself, I know myself," and as thinking deeply and reflectively about oneself and choosing to be oneself freely.³¹³ Beabout calls the person who reflects deeply "a self-conscious agent" who can use his/her free will in order to be his/her own self.³¹⁴ He insists that a person can become a self only when he can use his self-reflection and free will in order to choose to be himself.³¹⁵

As noted previously, to Kierkegaard, a human being is a synthesis of two poles, infinitude and finitude.³¹⁶ M. Jamie Ferreira calls this synthesis "the locus of becoming a self" with the help of one's consciousness. Infinitude's pole includes the eternal, the spiritual, and the possible, and finitude's pole includes the temporal, the secular, and the necessary.³¹⁷ A mere human does not have a dynamic interaction between these two poles,

³¹¹ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 29.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

³¹³ Gregory R. Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), 88-89.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

³¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 29.

³¹⁷ M. Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 152.

and Beabout appropriately describes this mere human being “an inert relation,” meaning that “the two poles are just there together.”³¹⁸ Becoming oneself means, to Kierkegaard, to become concrete. In order to become concrete, the self engages in the process of “an infinite moving away from itself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process,” because, for Kierkegaard, becoming concrete requires a synthesis, which is “neither to become finite nor to become infinite.”³¹⁹ On this point, as M. Jamie Ferreira rightly interprets Kierkegaard, becoming a self is “an activity; self is an achievement word.”³²⁰

1. The Etymological Definition of Despair

In many people’s minds, the word *despair* tends to be synonymous with being hopeless. People see despair as emotional stress. However, according to Beabout, the Danish word, *fortvivlelse*, which is translated into English as “despair,” has a different origin and connotation than the English word, and he clarifies its meaning to promote a better understanding of Kierkegaard’s concept of despair.³²¹ Beabout describes the etymological difference between these two words as follows:

The English word “despair” has a French and Latin origin; it means literally “without hope.” On the other hand, the Danish term *fortvivlelse* has a German origin. The root of the word, *tvivl*, is the Danish word for “doubt.” It corresponds to the German *Zweifel*. The prefix “*for-*” corresponds to the German prefix “*ver-*”; both serve to intensify the meaning of the root. Therefore, the Danish term *fortvivlelse*, like the German *verzweifeln*, means literally intensified doubt. Since doubting everything, even the possibility of significance and redemption, is to be without hope, it is correct to translate *fortvivlelse* as despair. However, the Danish term carries the connotation of intensified doubt in its etymology in a way that its

³¹⁸ Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, 87.

³¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 29-30.

³²⁰ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 152.

³²¹ Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, 71.

English translation does not.³²²

Thus, the Danish word *fortvivlelse* connotes “intensified doubt” as well as “without hope,” but the English word *despair* does not include all the connotations of *fortvivlelse*, which is the Danish word Kierkegaard uses. This point is very important in this dissertation because despair for Kierkegaard includes cognitive and philosophical aspects that can be approached through CBT.

In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard emphasizes that despair is deeply related to human will. He insists that human beings can doubt although they do not have any will to doubt, but they cannot despair without will: “because despair itself is a choice, because one can doubt [*tvivle*] without choosing it, but one cannot despair [*fortvivle*] without choosing it.”³²³ According to Kierkegaard, a person comes to have doubt when there is a gap between what the person thinks the person is and what the person really is.³²⁴ Beabout connects this point with Kierkegaard’s concepts of self and despair and maintains that a human being despairs when there is a gap in his/her self:

A doubt is a difference between two things, specifically between what one holds cognitively and what one is being asked to hold. Hence, in ordinary language we say, “I doubt that,” in such a way that we express that there is a gap between the two. With the concept *fortvivlelse*, this becomes a doubt of the personality. The doubting, the gap between two, is a gap within oneself. Hence, while Kierkegaard can use the term *fortvivlelse* to mean the same thing that we might ordinarily mean by the English word “despair,” the Danish term more easily lends itself to an analysis of the self where there is a doubting in the self. In this way, we can more easily understand how Kierkegaard uses the term despair to refer both to the feeling of a loss of hope or significance and also to a misrelation in the self.³²⁵

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2, 211.

³²⁴ Ibid., 212.

³²⁵ Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, 72-73.

As described above, despair is an emotional, cognitive, and volitional response to losing hope or significance, and it is a result of noticing the existence of a gap in oneself, which means that the self relates itself to itself in an improper way.

Based on Kierkegaard's definition, Korean American elderly Christians are exposed to various despair factors, such as immigration, acculturation, racism, aging, and ageism, because these factors drive them to doubt their worth as human beings. After immigrating, adult immigrants encounter a social change from a long-term position in the majority to being in the minority. This sudden change in social status results in a deep gap in self-identity, and the ideal self as in the majority abruptly collapses and they find that their real self is in a minority. When they encounter this gap, they doubt themselves and their worth as human beings. Limited English ability creates a gap between two different linguistic lives, also causing them to doubt themselves. When Jinsook could not understand her son's valedictory speech at his high school commencement, she said, "Why couldn't we understand what our son was saying?" In my opinion, she was actually saying, "My ideal self should have understood my son's valedictorian speech in this glorious moment, but my real self could not understand his speech." Jinsook was also dependent on her children for translation, and this likely brought her shame. Her dependency was not a characteristic of her ideal self. The acculturation gap between her husband and her children in terms of interracial-international marriages gave her family a relational gap, and this gap led her to realize that her family was far from her ideal family.

Acculturation is frequently identified with assimilation, and involuntary assimilation particularly separates immigrants from their original cultures. At the same time, immigrants cannot identify themselves with the host culture nor internalize the host

culture fully, and this cultural gap leads them to doubt their cultural and racial selves: Where am I? Who am I? Am I Korean or American? When they are marginalized by the host society during their acculturation process, the gap becomes deeper and wider, and their doubts about themselves are intensified.

Racism leads immigrants to feel a more serious gap between the ideal self and the real self: Am I a human being? Do I have worth as a human being, or am I just an inferior person to the people who belong to the host culture? When Minsoo was asked where he came from, he just kept silent. He could not answer that he came from Korea because he was worried about racism, and, according to him, this silent response was usual among Korean people in the past. His real self was a Korean, but he could not reveal this self. This gap caused him to doubt his identity and to despair over himself. In Soojin's story, her husband and she lived in Garden Grove, but one of his colleagues insulted him by saying that Garden Grove was not Garden Grove any more, but "Trash Grove." In her story, her husband's real self was called "Trash" by the colleague, and his ideal self was damaged by this remark. All of these gaps created environments for these persons in which they felt they could not become the human beings they thought they had to be or wanted to be.

Aging causes elderly immigrants to ask additional questions: Am I still a man or woman of dignity? Where is my dignity? Ageism gives them more intense challenges imposed by the society; they may be led to think, "I am a useless old dog." Internalized ageism particularly causes them to limit themselves. As Mija said, "I think people who are older than seventy or eighty should quit the church choir. I saw some elderly people in the choir and thought younger people should be there instead of them. They have to act

their ages.” Because of her internalized ageism, Mija saw her and her elderly church members’ real selves as damaged, limited, and useless.

2. The Dialectic of Despair

Kierkegaard describes despair as a dialectical structure. This means that, as Merold Westphal points out, Kierkegaard sees despair “as pairs of opposites as inseparable from each other as vowels and consonants or inhaling and exhaling.”³²⁶ Kierkegaard frames the meaning of despair through defining its opposite.³²⁷ For example, if a person does not feel or think she is in despair, this does not guarantee that she has not been in despair, rather, this exactly indicates that she has been in despair whether she is conscious of it or not. Therefore, to him, external peace or not being conscious of being in despair does not guarantee freedom from despair:

Not to be in despair can in fact signify precisely to be in despair, and it can signify having been rescued from being in despair. A sense of security and tranquility can signify being in despair; precisely this sense of security and tranquility can be the despair, and yet it can signify having conquered despair and having won peace. Not being in despair is not similar to not being sick, for not being sick cannot be the same as being sick, whereas not being in despair can be the very same as being in despair. It is not with despair as with a sickness, where feeling indisposed is the sickness. By no means. Here again the indisposition is dialectical. Never to have sensed this indisposition is precisely to be in despair.³²⁸

Kierkegaard’s dialectic of despair uses opposite counterparts to define despair indirectly. Therefore, as Ferreira points out, undialectical exercising of the two poles of the finite and the infinite is despair.³²⁹ Following are two examples of the dialectic of despair.

³²⁶ Merold Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 55.

³²⁷ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 153.

³²⁸ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 24-25.

³²⁹ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 155.

a. Despair as Failure and Despair as Ability

To Kierkegaard, first of all, despair is a self's failure to become itself. As described previously, Kierkegaard insists that in order to become concrete a self needs to go through a process of moving away from itself into infinite possibility and moving back to itself and the necessities of finitude through sustaining both possibility and necessity. In other words, a self needs a process of seeking possibility in itself and, at the same time, of realizing its limitations. This means that a concrete self has to integrate the infinite and the finite in itself in dynamic ways. Kierkegaard finds his concept of despair in this process: "Where, then, does the despair come from? From the relation in which the synthesis relates itself to itself."³³⁰ As mentioned earlier, he says that despair means to fail to be itself in this process; "if the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows that or not," and he calls this failure *misrelation*: "Despair is the misrelation in the relation of a synthesis that relates itself to itself."³³¹ To Kierkegaard, this misrelation is always possible in the dynamic interaction between the infinite and the finite.

For Kierkegaard, despair contains not only negative aspects of failure but also positive aspects of ability. Kierkegaard insists that despair reflects both human superiority over animals and humans who cannot despair.³³² He also points out that Christians who recognize despair are superior to people who do not.³³³ According to this, he describes despair as an ability; "to be able to despair is an infinite advantage."³³⁴ So, despair happens when a self fails to integrate the infinite and the finite, but human beings who

³³⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 16.

³³¹ Ibid., 29-30, 15.

³³² Ibid., 15.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

are in despair are superior to animals and people who cannot experience despair.

Therefore, as Ferreira points out, “Despair is a dialectical category because its possibility is a good thing, yet its actuality is a bad thing.”³³⁵

b. Despair as the Inability to Die and Get Rid of Oneself

For Kierkegaard, despair is paradoxical in that despair is a sickness unto death, but, at the same time, despair is the inability to die. To him, the sickness unto death, despair, is quite different than the physical sickness that ends with death because, based on a Christian viewpoint of death, death is a gateway into life.³³⁶ In this sense, despair is not a sickness unto death. However, despair becomes a sickness unto death when a person experiences the real despair that he cannot die even when he wants to die.

Kierkegaard argues,

But in another sense despair is even more definitely the sickness unto death. ... the torment of despair is precisely this inability to die. Thus it has more in common with the situation of a mortally ill person when he lies struggling with death and yet cannot die. Thus to be sick *unto* death is to be unable to die, yet not as if there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness is that there is not even the ultimate hope, death. When death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die.³³⁷

Based on this description, despair signifies that people cannot get rid of themselves even when they want to get rid of themselves. This inability to get rid of themselves produces more intense despair. Kierkegaard states,

In despairing over something, he really despaired over himself, and now he wants to be rid of himself. ... what is intolerable to him is that he cannot get rid of himself. ... he despairs over not being able to get rid of himself. ... He is

³³⁵ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 151.

³³⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 17.

³³⁷ Ibid.

consuming himself. But this is precisely what he in his despair [wants] and this is precisely what he to his torment cannot do, since the despair has inflamed something that cannot burn or be burned up in the self.³³⁸

Kierkegaard proposes that the principle of despair is that a person despairs over something, but internally and spiritually he despairs over himself and, as a result, he tries to get rid of himself. But the final result of despair is that he cannot get rid of himself. Despair begins with despairing over something, but this despair is not “proper” despair.³³⁹ The proper despair that comes after despairing over *something* is to despair over *oneself*, and Kierkegaard calls this “declared despair.”³⁴⁰ For him, “To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself—this is the formula for all despair.”³⁴¹ Therefore, to despair over something results in despairing over oneself, and to despair over oneself is included in all kinds of despair.

If the experiences of the six research participants are considered from Kierkegaard’s perspective, their despair began with acculturation, racism, ageism, and issues in and with the Korean American churches they attended. However, as immigrants, older adults, and Christians, they ended up despairing for themselves for having to go through these negative experiences. Mija did not know the school system of the U.S. very well and, as a result, she could not help her two sons finish their high school educations successfully. At first, she despaired over the negative result that her first son only graduated from a community college and her second son dropped out of school. However, in fact, she despaired over herself for not being able to support her children well. In

³³⁸ Ibid., 19.

³³⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

addition, when Mija said that elderly people should quit all church work, she actually despaired over herself and other elderly church members by internalizing a negative social view of elderly people. Yet, they cannot undo being old.

When several research participants said they regretted their past actions and experiences, they actually despaired over themselves because they could not change their pasts. Jinsook first despaired over the situation in which she could not understand her son's speech and had to depend on her children because of her limited English skills, but eventually she despaired over herself for her English deficiency. When Minsoo experienced racism and could not respond that he came from Korea, he actually despaired over himself as a person who was an alien to the host society. When Soojin witnessed her husband being insulted by his colleagues, she actually despaired for him and herself because they were regarded as "trash" by others. When Jinsook reported that she regretted immigrating when her husband passed away and she felt lonely, her final comment was, "Anyway, it was my fault for leaving Korea." She despaired over being alone, without her husband and without assistance from her children, thus, she actually despaired over herself for choosing to immigrate.

When Soojin, Chulsoo, Mija, and Minsoo mentioned their disappointments with the Korean American churches they attended, they despaired over themselves, who were parts of and nurtured by the churches, yet they could not bring changes into those churches. They were also disappointed with themselves because they came from the same country as those who caused them to be disappointed. When Soojin could not meet her spiritual thirst in her current church and could not move to another church where there was a pastor she heavily relied on spiritually because she thought his sermons were what

she needed for her spiritual life, she despaired over herself. She could not switch to her preferred church because of her responsibilities for other elderly church members and her husband and because of her weak, aging body.

3. Categories of Despair

Kierkegaard delineates three categories of despair: despair as defined by finitude and infinitude, despair as defined by necessity and possibility, and despair as defined by consciousness. Each of these will be expounded on separately.

a. Despair as Defined by Finitude and Infinitude

According to Kierkegaard, to be a self, infinitude and finitude have to be synthesized in the self. He relates consciousness with the interrelationship between infinitude and finitude when he states, “The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude.”³⁴²

Finitude’s Despair is to Lack Infinitude

Kierkegaard defines finitude’s despair as being connected to lacking infinitude, to sticking to “the secular mentality,” and to lacking an understanding of spirituality and weakening oneself in a spiritual sense.³⁴³ People struggling with finitude’s despair indulge in pleasures and absorb themselves in “all sorts of secular matters,” without paying attention to infinitude and spirituality.³⁴⁴ To Kierkegaard, finitude’s despair comes from losing one’s own self after gaining all earthly advantages. Finitude’s despair does not cause any inconvenience to the person experiencing it, and it is not regarded as despair by that person, because he has what he wants to have. However, the person does

³⁴² Ibid., 29-30.

³⁴³ Ibid., 33.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

not notice that he has lost himself, his spirit, while he has gained secular things.

Kierkegaard says,

So it is with finitude's despair. Because a man is in this kind of despair, he can very well live on in temporality, indeed, actually all the better, can appear to be a man, be publicly acclaimed, honored, and esteemed, be absorbed in all the temporal goals. ... spiritually speaking, they have no self, no self for whose sake they could venture everything, no self before God—however self-seeking they are otherwise.³⁴⁵

In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard also avers that this despair damages one's soul:

It is despair to gain the whole world and in such a way that one damages one's soul, ... When I in my despair gain the whole world, I damage my soul by making myself finite, since I have my life in the finite. When I despair over losing the whole world, I damage my soul, for I make it finite in the very same way. Since here again I see my soul as established by the finite.³⁴⁶

The danger of finitude's despair is that it is not noticed as despair in the world.

People undergoing finitude's despair enjoy their richness on earth, but they delude themselves into thinking they are realizing themselves, and they do not recognize that the presence of external earthly things does not guarantee they are becoming themselves. People experiencing finitude's despair do not comprehend how deeply they are in despair because of their externality and comfort in the world.

Based on this argument, Kierkegaard criticizes the general opinion that despair is rare, insisting that despair is very common even though people are unaware of it. This being unaware of being in despair prevents human beings in despair from being cured of despair. Only the person who admits she is in despair can be cured. In Kierkegaard's words:

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 35.

³⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 221.

The common view that despair is a rarity is entirely wrong; on the contrary, it is universal. The common view, which assumes that everyone who does not think or feel he is in despair is not or that only he who says he is in despair is, is totally false. On the contrary, the person who without affectation says that he is in despair is still a little closer, is dialectically closer, to being cured than all those who are not regarded as such and who do not regard themselves as being in despair. ... most men live without ever becoming conscious of being destined as spirit—hence all the so-called security, contentment with life, etc., which is simply despair. On the other hand, those who say they are in despair are usually either those who have so deep a nature that they are bound to become conscious as spirit or those whom bitter experiences and dreadful decisions have assisted in becoming conscious as spirit: it is either the one or the other; the person who is really devoid of despair is very rare indeed.³⁴⁷

If Kierkegaard's concept of finitude's despair is combined with Allport's notion of the extrinsic motivation for religiosity, extrinsically motivated Korean American church members regard Christian faith as something to use, and they seek only cultural and social belonging, psychological comfort, a sense of empowerment, a sharing of Korean language and Korean foods, and so on. As described previously, Korean American elderly Christians receive useful resources from their participation in Christian practices, but, from Kierkegaard's perspective, they still suffer from finitude's despair, without any awareness of it if they do not seek spirituality and search for the meaning of their immigrant existences. However, as Kierkegaard points out, their extrinsic religiosity is not regarded as despair because they can meet their psychological and social needs from their participation in Christian activities. Extrinsic religiosity is positively related to depression and, as discussed before, the research participants became disappointed with the extrinsic Christian faith of the Korean American churches they attended. However, Minsoo moved from extrinsic Christian faith to intrinsic Christian faith after he experienced genuine pastoral care from his pastors at the time of his daughter's funeral.

³⁴⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 26.

Thus, Christians who suffer from finitude's despair without their knowledge may still change their motivation, seek spirituality, and search for the meaning of their Christian faiths and their lives as immigrants through experiencing genuine pastoral care and love.

Infinitude's Despair is to Lack Finitude

According to Kierkegaard, human beings try to overcome their limitedness through trying to deny their own reality. In this process, human beings despair because denying their limitedness disregards their own reality, and their own reality becomes just fantasy; they reject the God who created them through rejecting themselves. Infinitude's despair lacks reality (finitude). According to Kierkegaard,

every human existence that presumably has become or simply wants to be infinite, in fact, every moment in which a human existence has become or simply wants to be infinite is despair. For the self is the synthesis of which the finite is the limiting and the infinite the extending constituent. Infinitude's despair, therefore, is the fantastic, the unlimited.³⁴⁸

Thus, Kierkegaard insists that the fantastic and the unlimited lead human beings to forget their realities as limited and to live illusory lives.

This Kierkegaardian concept of infinitude's despair shares common ground with the concept of identity assimilation in the identity process theory discussed above. Identity assimilation is a defense mechanism that protects elderly individuals from recognizing weakness in the self and leads these individuals to increase self-respect despite various issues accompanying the aging process and ageism. This strategy allows elderly individuals to pay attention only to the positive aspects of life and to ignore negative facets of aging in order to perpetuate a positive sense of self. Thus, negative and threatening information about the self is screened and blocked by this mechanism, and

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

this informational distortion causes people to avoid uncomfortable realizations about the effects of aging and about their aged selves. As a result, even though they sustain a positive view of the self, their positive view of the self typically gives them a false sense of peace and comfort. From Kierkegaard's viewpoint, this defense mechanism prevents them from coming to terms with their reality and leads them to live lives lacking finitude. The selves functioning under infinitude's despair and the identity assimilation defense mechanism fail to become genuine selves by denying their reality and their aging selves.

As discussed in Chapter 3, some of the research participants failed to pay attention to both the various losses that accompany the aging process and continuity, integrity, and being independent and active in spite of aging. The emphasis on only one aspect of aging, negative or positive, prevents elderly people from overcoming ageism and accepting the tension between continuity and change in the aging process, which is a way of overcoming ageism. Likewise, a balance between identity assimilation, which is continuity-oriented, and identity accommodation, which is change-oriented, is a key to overcoming ageism. In Kierkegaard's paradigm, Korean-American elderly Christians can overcome despair by pursuing possibility (continuity) and, at the same time, by acknowledging necessity (change).

b. Despair as Defined by Possibility and Necessity

Kierkegaard insists that possibility and necessity are necessary for the self to become itself.³⁴⁹ When a self lacks possibility or necessity, it despairs.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 35.

Possibility's Despair Is to Lack Necessity

Possibility's despair parallels the despair of infinitude. Kierkegaard says, "If possibility outruns necessity so that the self runs away from itself in possibility, it has no necessity to which it is to return; this is possibility's despair."³⁵⁰ A self experiencing possibility's despair is living in the fantasy that everything is possible for the self. Everything seems to be feasible to the self in possibility, but the self does not notice its necessity. The self runs away from itself without any limitations, but the self does not realize it has something to be done in the world and loses the point to which to return. When it cannot find the self to which to return, it becomes a missing child. This is possibility's despair.

Every self has its own possibilities, but its possibilities can come true only when its possibilities go together with its necessities. This means that only when necessity gives consent to possibility does a person achieve the actuality of "the unity of possibility and necessity." Kierkegaard says,

That a self appears to be such and such in the possibility of itself is only a half-truth, for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from or is only half of itself. Therefore, the question is how the necessity of this particular self defines it more specifically. Possibility is like a child's invitation to a party; the child is willing at once, but the question now is whether the parents will give permission—and as it is with the parents, so it is with necessity.³⁵¹

Thus, possibility becomes true only when necessity is achieved, and, without necessity's being achieved, possibility is just half of the self and a half self cannot avoid despairing.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 35-36.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 36-37.

Necessity's Despair Is to Lack Possibility

Kierkegaard describes necessity's despair as the despair of not being able to find possibility. He asserts, "If a human existence is brought to the point where it lacks possibility, then it is in despair and is in despair every moment it lacks possibility."³⁵² To him, "to lack possibility means either that everything has become necessary for a person or that everything has become trivial."³⁵³ Ferreira calls this necessity, "the imprisonment of the self's possibility."³⁵⁴ The only salvation and cure for necessity's despair, Kierkegaard insists, is the possibility which comes to despairers through their faith that everything is possible for God:

What is decisive is that with God everything is possible. This is eternally true and consequently true at every moment. This is indeed a generally recognized truth, which is commonly expressed in this way, but the critical decision does not come until a person is brought to his extremity, when, humanly speaking, there is no possibility. Then the question is whether he will *believe* that for God everything is possible, that is, whether he will believe.³⁵⁵

However, this faith and belief do not come to the despairer automatically. The despairer has to will to believe in God's possibilities because despair is a choice which comes from human will and the cure, faith, also requires a choice.

Based on the concept of bipolar ageism or new ageism, if Korean American elderly Christians focus only on their continuity, they cannot help but experience despair. However, looking at the collected data from the interviews summarized in Chapter 3, it is clear that possibility's despair was very rare among my research partners. Rather, they tend to experience necessity's despair as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians

³⁵² Ibid., 37.

³⁵³ Ibid., 40.

³⁵⁴ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 155.

³⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 38.

because acculturation burdens, racism, ageism, and the issues of Korean-American churches deprive them of the opportunities to think about their possibilities and compel them to focus on the extrinsic motivations of their Christian faiths, such as financial, physical, psychological, and social stability. They still suffer from acculturation stress, family issues caused by immigration, aging issues, and spiritual issues. Thus, pastoral care for this population needs to focus on caring for their necessity's despair that they have various social, psychosocial, and spiritual needs, while emphasizing that they still have possibilities as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians and while still paying attention to the dangers of bipolar ageism. In spite of their acculturation issues, racism, aging, ageism, and the issues of Korean-American churches, they are still able to find meaning in their lives as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians and to sustain their own human dignity.

4. Despair as Defined by Consciousness

Kierkegaard insists that despair should be understood in terms of self-consciousness because a person cannot become a self without self-consciousness: "The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self. A person who has no will at all is not a self; but the more will he has, the more self-consciousness he has also."³⁵⁶ To Kierkegaard, the level of despair is determined by the level of self-consciousness: "The ever increasing intensity of despair depends upon the degree of consciousness or is proportionate to its increase: the greater the degree of consciousness, the more intensive the despair."³⁵⁷ Kierkegaard divides despair into two forms of despair based on consciousness: unconscious despair and

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 29.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 42.

conscious despair. Conscious despair also has two forms: despair in weakness and despair in defiance.

a. Unconscious Despair

Unconscious despair means that a person does not know he is in despair.³⁵⁸

Merold Westphal calls this unconscious despair, “either the despair of ignorance or the despair of spiritlessness.”³⁵⁹ To Kierkegaard, this form of despair is not despair in a strict sense because, as Beabout explains, “There is not misrelation in the self ... since there is no self.”³⁶⁰ The difference between a person who knows he is in despair and a person who does not know he is in despair is that the person who knows he is in despair is much closer to the place of being saved from his despair. However, at the same time, Kierkegaard maintains that being aware of being in despair does not guarantee deliverance from despair, because staying in despair after realizing one is in despair produces stronger despair, and this is “a new negativity” that the original negativity, despair, produces.³⁶¹ Kierkegaard says,

The individual who is ignorant of his despair is further from the truth and deliverance than one who knows it and yet remains in despair, for in another sense, ... the person who is conscious of his despair and remains in it is further from deliverance, because his despair is more intensive.³⁶²

Nonetheless, unconscious despair is the most dangerous despair because it is “the most common in the world,” and it demonstrates the representative feature of despair in

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 44.

³⁵⁹ Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," 52.

³⁶⁰ Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, 93.

³⁶¹ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 44.

³⁶² Ibid.

which despair causes despairers to avoid confronting their situations.³⁶³ Kierkegaard asserts:

Yet ignorance is so far from breaking the despair or changing despair to nondespair that it can in fact be the most dangerous form of despair. ... the individual who in ignorance is in despair is in a way secured against becoming aware—that is, he is altogether secure in the power of despair.³⁶⁴

As a result of not being aware of being in despair, an individual cannot break out of it, since despair removes the motivation for recovery.

From Kierkegaard's perspective, the most dangerous factor for Korean-American elderly Christians is that, when they seek extrinsic religious motivation and feel satisfied with the social and psychological resources they gain from their participation in Christian practices, they mistakenly think they have no relationship with despair. Kierkegaard calls this extrinsic motivation for their religiosity the most serious source of despair for this population because these people lack spirituality and fail to become selves by failing to seek the meanings of their lives as immigrants. They seek only physical, psychological, and social satisfaction, and, if their needs are met, their will to become selves and to be delivered from despair disappears. So, pastoral care providers should pay attention to those whose levels of life satisfaction are high and whose extrinsic religious needs are satisfied by their religious activities.

b. Two Kinds of Conscious Despair

Kierkegaard divides conscious despair into two categories: despair in weakness and despair in defiance. However, he qualifies this division: "No despair is entirely free of defiance; indeed, the very phrase 'not to will to be' implies defiance. On the other hand,

³⁶³ Ibid., 45.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 44.

even despair's most extreme defiance is never really free of some weakness. So the distinction is only relative."³⁶⁵ In other words, any type of despair contains some elements of both weakness and defiance.

Despair in Weakness

By "despair in weakness," Kierkegaard implies becoming someone not oneself, since people suffering this form of despair cannot find their selves. Ferreira describes this despair as follows:

We see people every day who are not satisfied with themselves. For some it is so overwhelming that they simply want to get rid of themselves – they want to be no self. Others want to get rid of themselves by being someone else: "If only I had X" . . . or "If only I were Y." They want to be another self. In other words, such people admit themselves to be inadequate or even hateful to themselves, and so want to be rid of themselves or be another self.³⁶⁶

This lack of positive self-regard comes about because people experiencing despair in weakness identify themselves with external, temporal, and secular conditions, such as being wealthy and being respected by others. People despair in weakness when they lose all these external things, but, to Kierkegaard, this is not real despair because "to despair is to lose the eternal."³⁶⁷ According to Kierkegaard, real despair is still a part of such person, although the person with weakness's despair does not know what real despair is.³⁶⁸

However, Kierkegaard insists that the person with despair in weakness can reflect that despair is not always brought about by externalities and that despair is not just an agony but an act "of separation whereby the self becomes aware of itself as essentially

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 49.

³⁶⁶ Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, 157.

³⁶⁷ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 52.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

different from the environment and external events and from their influence upon it.”³⁶⁹

Although, to Kierkegaard, this reflection is very limited, such reflection leads a self to differentiate itself from all kinds of externalities and gives the self “a dim idea that there may even be something eternal in the self.”³⁷⁰

In spite of the contributions of reflection, this process ends in the despair of weakness because people finally realize that they have not done enough self-reflection and it is their weakness that makes the externalities absolute. Kierkegaard says, “Nevertheless, his struggles are in vain; the difficulty he has run up against requires a total break with immediacy, and he does not have the self-reflection or the ethical reflection for that.”³⁷¹ To him, this self-reflection comes from “infinite abstraction from every externality,” that is, from endless seeking of meaning from all aspects of our usual lives.³⁷²

According to Merold Westphal, this form of despair is related to “moral weakness,” which lacks “will power.”³⁷³ People in despair in weakness do not have enough willpower or emotional strength to sustain themselves when something bad happens to them or they do something they think is bad. As a result, they are in despair due to not willing to be their selves. Westphal states, “I either wish to be someone else, or, in a more sophisticated form, I disown myself without seeking to be someone else by withdrawing into a private reserve from which I become the observer of the self I do not

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 54.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 54-55.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 55.

³⁷² Ibid., 54-55.

³⁷³ Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," 52.

wish to be.”³⁷⁴ Therefore, according to Westphal, despair in weakness happens when the will is too weak to sustain itself.

To Kierkegaard, to despair over externalities also means to despair over eternity and over oneself because, when a person puts all value and worth on externalities, eternity and the self are disregarded as worthless. This is despair of the eternal and over oneself. Kierkegaard says,

Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is in reality also despair of the eternal and over oneself, insofar as it is despair, for this is indeed the formula for all despair. ... He thinks he is despairing over something earthly and talks constantly of that over which he despairs, and yet he is despairing of the eternal, for the fact that he attributes such great worth to something earthly—or, to carry this further, that he attributes to something earthly such great worth, or that he first makes something earthly into the whole world and then attributes such great worth to the earthly—this is in fact to despair of the eternal.³⁷⁵

For Kierkegaard, despair of the eternal and over the self is a higher level of despair than the despair over externalities because this despair helps people to realize and understand they have a weakness—that when they place all of their values in the secular, they lose eternity and their selves.³⁷⁶ The next step in this type of despair is to lead people to realize that their despair is actually their weakness’s despair and to despair over their weakness. This new despair helps them to see that they have eternal selves which do not depend on something earthly. So, Kierkegaard insists that the despair over the earthly becomes the despair of the eternal and that the eternal cannot intervene in the earthly despair in order to heal and comfort people in despair.³⁷⁷

In light of Kierkegaard’s concept of the despair of weakness, Korean American

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 60-61.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 61.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 70.

elderly Christians can find hope that there is a remedy for their despair. As seen in the previous chapters, as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians, they suffer from various unmet needs and despair over their needs. They need more acculturation, more fluent English, more financial stability, better health, better lives for their children, more help from their children, better protection from racism and ageism, and better churches. They want to be different. Through assimilation, they want to be different selves who do not need to experience the difficult issues caused by acculturation, limited English, homesickness and loneliness, racism, aging, ageism, and Korean-American churches. However, their overemphasis on their needs and interests typically leads them to lose sight of their eternal needs, which are to become selves and to seek the eternal. Thus, their despair of weakness needs to lead them to the real despair of losing the eternal and the self. As Kierkegaard asserts, this shift is possible through self-reflection, even though self-reflection is only partially beneficial because reflection gives only a dim view of the existence of the eternal. Thus, pastoral practices for the despair of this population should be practices that guide them to reflect on their despair over externalities and, ultimately, over the eternal and on the meaning of their lives as immigrants.

In Despair to Will to Be Oneself: Defiance

The form of despair Kierkegaard calls “defiance” is a more serious type of despair than despair in weakness, and this is the last step of conscious despair. He describes the order of conscious despair as follows: “First comes despair over the earthly or over something earthly, then despair of the eternal, over oneself. Then comes defiance.”³⁷⁸ Despair in defiance comes after people realize they do not will to be themselves because

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 67.

they focus on the external, and this causes them to lose their selves and the eternal, thus, they are not comforted and healed by the eternal.³⁷⁹ Kierkegaard calls this form of despair “defiance” because the self does not want to lose itself; it wants to be itself and separate itself from the power from which it originated or try to ignore the notion that there is this kind of power.³⁸⁰ Kierkegaard describes this defiance as follows: “The self in despair wants to be master of itself or to create itself, to make his self into the self he wants to be, to determine what he will have or not have in his concrete self.”³⁸¹ The person in defiance refuses to hope and maintain the possibility of being helped and healed by the power (i.e., God).

James L. Marsh insists that the difference between despair in weakness and despair in defiance is that despair in weakness focuses on one pole of the self, finitude and necessity, and despair in defiance consists of the other pole of infinitude and possibility.³⁸² People in the despair of defiance regard themselves as beings with infinite possibilities and try to make themselves anew through “ceaseless experimentation” with themselves.³⁸³ However, this experimentation always fails because they retain their anxiety and refuse to throw themselves “into the arms of God in a leap of faith” and let God remove their afflictions.³⁸⁴ Marsh suggests that Kierkegaard calls this process

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 68.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² James L. Marsh, "Kierkegaard's Double Dialectic of Despair and Sin," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 72.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

“defiance” because people with this form of despair are not willing to be who they really are, sinners.³⁸⁵

Although there is a difference between despair in weakness and despair in defiance, despair in defiance parallels despair in weakness because people in both forms of despair desperately will to be themselves, while actually trying to be people who they are not and, therefore, get rid of their real selves.³⁸⁶ According to Kierkegaard,

The other form of despair, in despair to will to be oneself, can be traced back to the first, in despair not to will to be oneself, ... But if he despairingly wills to be himself, he certainly does not want to be rid of himself. Well, so it seems, but upon closer examination it is clear that the contradiction is the same. The self that he despairingly wants to be is a self that he is not (for to will to be the self that he is in truth is the very opposite of despair), that is, he wants to tear his self away from the power that established it. ... But this is his way of willing to get rid of himself, to rid himself of the self that he is in order to be the self that he has dreamed up.³⁸⁷

Thus, despair in defiance is an extension of despair in weakness, and the reality of both forms of despair is the same, although the external characteristics of the two are opposites.

As Westphal points out, despair has a will-aspect.³⁸⁸ This is because, as Kierkegaard mentions, despair occurs when a self tries “to will to be rid of oneself.”³⁸⁹ Westphal rightly states, “Will and consciousness are proportionate, which seems to suggest that just as every despair involves some degree of will, it also involves some degree of consciousness.”³⁹⁰ On this note, Westphal calls despair in defiance the

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 75.

³⁸⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 20.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," 53.

³⁸⁹ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 20.

³⁹⁰ Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," 53.

“absolute self-assertion” of “willing to be self-conscious freedom.”³⁹¹ Westphal characterizes the despair of defiance as follows: “I will neither be comforted nor corrected by anyone other than myself. ... for the despair of defiance is the desire of the finite self to be God.”³⁹² As Westphal explains, Kierkegaard thinks the pinnacle of this form of despair is the attempt to be God without recognizing that the self is a finite being created by God and has a duty to be the self designed by God.

4. Despair is Sin

Kierkegaard’s notion of despair has another theological dimension: he considers despair to be a sin. Kierkegaard describes sin as being deeply caused by human will, rather than human knowledge. This indicates that people commit sins only when they intentionally decide to commit sins.³⁹³ Kierkegaard says, “Sin is not a matter of a person’s not having understood what is right but of his being unwilling to understand it, of his not willing what is right.”³⁹⁴ The will leads people in despair to become defiant and to become sinful in an evident way. In other words, since people despair only when they will to despair, they sin: “sin is ... before God in despair not to will to be oneself or in despair to will to be oneself.”³⁹⁵ Therefore, despair comes from inside a person rather than from outside, and the person who despairs is sinning, instead of just experiencing emotional problems.³⁹⁶

³⁹¹ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 82.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 95.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 96.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 99-101.

For Kierkegaard, sin comes into being only when God or the idea of God exists.³⁹⁷ He describes despair as “a new quality and qualification by being a self directly before God,” one that is sinful.³⁹⁸ To him, being a self directly before God means to be “the theological self,” whose standard is not that of human beings but of God, and this standard intensifies the self’s despair because one cannot meet it.³⁹⁹ Stated another way, awareness of sinning causes the intensification of despair, which is deeper weakness or deeper defiance, because people begin to despair over their own sins. According to Kierkegaard, “The intensification is the new sin of despairing over one’s sin.”⁴⁰⁰ A person commits a sin, the fact of committing the sin makes the person despair, and this is a new sin. This new sin is a more intense despair than the first form of despair. Kierkegaard describes how this intensification of despair works as follows:

Despair over sin is an effort to survive by sinking even deeper. ... Sin itself is the struggle of despair; but then, when all the powers are depleted, there may be a new intensification, a new demonic closing up within himself: this is despair over sin. ... It is an effort to give stability and interest to sin as a power by deciding once and for all that one will refuse to hear anything about repentance and grace.⁴⁰¹

Thus, despair continues its existence and influences people in despair, causing them to be trapped in a cycle of despair by reminding them over and over that they are despairing. This is a characteristic of despair: despair continuously produces more intense despair. As a result, people in despair reject all positive possibilities, such as repentance and grace,

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 77.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 79.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 79-80.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 110.

and lose “all relation to grace” and also to themselves.⁴⁰² The rejection of positive possibilities means people will not forgive themselves, even though God wants to forgive them, because, as Kierkegaard suggests, they are absorbed in sin too deeply and think God will not forgive them because of their sins.⁴⁰³

Kierkegaard asserts that the two kinds of despair, weakness and defiance, cause this despair over the inability to accept the forgiveness of sins in different ways. Despair in weakness causes people to lack the courage to believe that God will forgive their sins, and despair in defiance leads people to not will to believe that God will forgive their sins.⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, Kierkegaard places the sin of despair over the forgiveness of sins in the category of offense against God:

Sin was despair, the intensification was despair over sin. But now God offers reconciliation in the forgiveness of sin. Nevertheless, the sinner still despairs, and despair acquires a still deeper manifestation: it now relates to God in a way, and yet precisely because it is even further away it is even more intensively absorbed in sin. When the sinner despairs of the forgiveness of sins, it is almost as if he walked right up to God and said, “No, there is no forgiveness of sins, it is impossible,” and it looks like close combat.⁴⁰⁵

Rejecting God’s forgiveness is defiance because it renounces the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation with God that God has already presented, and this leads people farther away from God.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 114, 116.

5. Possibility, Faith, and Despair

To Kierkegaard, the opposite of sin is faith, rather than virtue, because, based on Romans 14:23, “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”⁴⁰⁶ He defines faith as a self’s trusting in God’s supremacy in the process of becoming itself: “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.”⁴⁰⁷ According to Kierkegaard, human existence is based on faith rather than thought. He criticizes the philosophical assumption, *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), from a Christian perspective, insisting that “according to your faith, be it unto you, or, as you believe, so you are, to believe is to be.”⁴⁰⁸ He also maintains that faith, not understanding, is the way to become close to God: “To believe is indeed to lose the understanding in order to gain God.”⁴⁰⁹ Human existence is based on faith, through acknowledging that God created and is sustaining the self and trusting God at every moment.

Kierkegaard asserts that possibility is the only antidote for despair, and this possibility is given to despairers through faith. This means that faith is the way through which a person in despair can attain possibility, which brings deliverance to the person. Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of possibility for a person in despair as follows:

When someone wants to despair, then the word is: Get possibility, get possibility, possibility is the only salvation. A possibility—then the person in despair breathes again, he revives again, for without possibility a person seems unable to breathe. ... when it depends upon *faith*—then only this helps: that for God everything is possible.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 38-39.

Faith can integrate the finite and infinite poles in the self and can offset the imbalance between the two poles because faith is “the ever infallible antidote for despair.”⁴¹¹

Kierkegaard maintains that

the believer has the possibility—because for God everything is possible at every moment. This is the good health of faith that resolves contradictions. The contradiction here is that, humanly speaking, downfall is certain, but that there is possibility nonetheless. Good health generally means the ability to resolve contradictions. For example, in the realm of the bodily or physical, a draft is a contradiction, for a draft is disparately or undialectically cold and warm, but a good healthy body resolves this contradiction and does not notice the draft. So also with faith.⁴¹²

Faith can resolve the contradiction which is the reason for despair because there is still possibility in God, even when a person in despair is experiencing extreme hopelessness. Thus, faith helps the self integrate its opposing poles of finitude and infinitude through believing that everything is possible.

John D. Glenn helpfully explains Kierkegaard’s idea that faith is the key to harmonizing the imbalance between the two poles in the self:

Faith makes possible a harmonious relation between different aspects of the self as synthesis. Only in faith, . . . , can the self exist without despair both as finite—inevitably involved in and concerned about concrete actuality—and as infinite—capable of some sort of transcendence of that actuality.⁴¹³

Westphal suggests that faith can solve the problem of the contradiction in the self through accomplishing the task of acknowledging God as the self’s foundation and through the self grounding itself in God.⁴¹⁴ If a self fails to fulfill this task, a self cannot overcome

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 39-40.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ John D. Glenn, "The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard's Work," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 21.

⁴¹⁴ Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Psychology and Unconscious Despair," 49.

despair. Marsh similarly affirms: “to ground myself through faith in the Power that constituted me is to escape despair and to find myself.”⁴¹⁵

However, sustaining faith in God despite despair does not come naturally; it is a very arduous process. Kierkegaard calls this process of sustaining faith, “the battle of faith.”⁴¹⁶ He describes this battle as follows:

The believer sees and understands his downfall, humanly speaking (in what has happened to him, or in what he has ventured), but he believes. For this reason he does not collapse. He leaves it entirely to God how he is to be helped, but he believes that for God everything is possible. To *believe* his downfall is impossible. To understand that humanly it is his downfall and nevertheless to believe in possibility is to believe.⁴¹⁷

As Kierkegaard points out, faith helps us to believe that God can do anything in any situation, and people need strong wills to sustain their faiths in the battle of faith. He insists that faith is not a natural human response to difficult situations for which people need help. Only a person who wills to trust God can have faith because, just as despair is a choice, faith is also a choice.⁴¹⁸

For Kierkegaard, despair is always in the present, even if despair comes from the past. Despairers bring despair on themselves through their choices. Therefore, despair is a personal choice, and not to be in despair requires destroying the possibility of despair in every moment.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, overcoming despair requires a decision-making process and, as has just been described, Kierkegaard considers this process “the battle of faith.” People of faith and belief understand that, rather than falling into despair, they can believe that

⁴¹⁵ Marsh, "Kierkegaard's Double Dialectic of Despair and Sin," 68.

⁴¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 38-39.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

everything is possible for God, and this prevents them from cycling downward. So, faith is “the ever infallible antidote for despair.”⁴²⁰

Although faith is the antidote by which a person in despair can overcome despair, Kierkegaard also insists that despair is the first factor in faith in a dialectical way. “Note that here despair over sin is dialectically understood as pointing toward faith. ... in fact, it is implied in despair’s also being the first element in faith. ... offense as annulled possibility is an element in faith, but offense directed away from faith is sin.”⁴²¹ Despair is the first step of faith because only the person who experiences despair can, by becoming spirit, have a relationship with God and realize that everything is possible for God. Kierkegaard says, “Only he whose being has been so shaken that he has become spirit by understanding that everything is possible, only he has anything to do with God.”⁴²² Therefore, despair is the first element of faith.

6. Despair and Love

Kierkegaard asserts that to believe is to love, and belief requires love: “A believer, after all, is a lover.”⁴²³ In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard extends his concept of despair to the human relationship and insists that to love is not to despair over others but to sustain hope for them. Kierkegaard states that despair is “to give up possibility and to assume the impossibility of the good.”⁴²⁴ Despair over others refuses “to hope with regard to the

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 40, footnote.

⁴²² Ibid., 40.

⁴²³ Ibid., 103.

⁴²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 253.

other person.”⁴²⁵ To Kierkegaard, abandoning the idea that good things are possible for another person means to stop loving the person. He strongly urges his readers to hope and not to despair because love is a duty and, therefore, hope is a duty:

Never give up on any human being; do not despair, not even at the last moment—no, hope all things.⁴²⁶

Hope all things: give up on no human being, since to give up on him is to give up your love for him—in other words, if you do not give it up, then you hope; but if you give up your love for him, then you yourself cease to be one who loves.⁴²⁷

Therefore, hope does not give up believing in possibilities for others. The person of hope refuses to despair with regard to another person because the person who hopes keeps imagining, expecting, and believing in the possibility of the good of others.

To Kierkegaard, a human being is not a simple physical-psychological being, but a synthesis between the physical-psychological and the spiritual. People become real selves only when they resolve the conflicts between these two aspects, and despair develops when this synthesis fails. As Gregory Beabout points out, Kierkegaard uses the meaning of *despair* in Danish to suggest not only an emotional reaction to hopelessness, but also profound doubt due to the gap between the two poles in the self, finitude and infinitude. When people notice there is a mis-relation between these two poles, they despair as a result of the self’s failing to harmonize the poles. Kierkegaard uses dialectical methods to explain despair. Despair is a failure, but, at the same time, it is an ability that does not belong to animals or people who do not know they are spirit. Despair is the sickness unto death, but people in despair cannot die even when they want to die.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 254.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 255.

According to Kierkegaard, despair has various forms. The form of despair Kierkegaard calls “finitude’s despair” focuses only on earthly pleasures of all kinds, and it harms people’s souls while they enjoy their earthly lives. Infinitude’s despair lacks connections with reality and leads people to live hollow lives. Possibility’s despair is so indulgent in fantasy that people forget they are human beings who need to accomplish the tasks of daily living. Necessity’s despair lacks a sense of possibility, and people with this type of despair are imprisoned in everyday necessities and cannot envision possibilities. With unconscious despair, people do not know they are in despair, and, for Kierkegaard, this is not really despair because the self does not exist. Suffering from despair in weakness, people refuse to become themselves and instead desire to become other persons because they do not like themselves. With despair in defiance, people really want to become themselves and to separate themselves from God, but they despair because the selves they strongly want to become are not the selves they are currently.

According to Kierkegaard, despair is a sin because it is based on human will. People will to despair even though God always gives them opportunities to reconcile themselves with God. Despair reproduces more intense despair because people cannot live up to the standards of God, and this sin causes people to despair over their sins. Kierkegaard introduces faith as the opposite of sin, and through it, people gain possibility. He insists that possibility is the only medicine for people in despair, faith results in love, and love does not despair over others and maintains hope for them.

However, in my opinion, Kierkegaard fails to differentiate suffering from sin. If necessity’s despair increases due to significant life transitions, such as immigration, acculturation, and aging, and overshadows possibility, and if possibility is limited and

suppressed by social sins, such as racism and ageism, is the despair caused by increased necessity and social sins still a sin? I would say no, it is not, but rather, it is suffering. When a person immigrates to another country, the person suffers due to variables related to the necessities of daily life, such as limited language proficiency, lack of cultural competence, lack of agency, and acculturation stress, and thus, his or her possibilities are limited. As a result, the immigrant experiences the despair of necessity, and this despair is not a sin; it is suffering. If racism and ageism diminish the possibilities of elderly immigrants by disregarding their possibilities, agency, and hope and highlighting their necessity and limitedness, this is suffering perpetrated by social sins. If my six research participants experience lack of hope, meaning, and agency, failure to accomplish their possibilities, and regrets, then they all suffer from difficulties related to immigration, acculturation, aging, racism, ageism, and their spiritual communities.

Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of faith in the sense that, for God, everything is possible. However, the possibilities God can open up might be different from our expectations. For example, when Jesus was dying on the cross, there was a possibility that God could have rescued him from his suffering, but, as Moltmann argues, God chose to suffer with Jesus on the cross and suffer from Jesus' suffering, even though in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed for God's intervention.⁴²⁸ If God chose to intervene in Jesus' suffering by suffering with Jesus and suffering from Jesus' suffering, God also chooses to intervene in the despair caused by immigration, acculturation, aging, and spiritual environments by suffering with elderly immigrants. Therefore, Kierkegaard fails to consider the possible ways in which God may work through despair.

⁴²⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row. Publishers, 1974), 215.

C. Psychological Dimensions of Despair

In this section, I will explore the basic theories of Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT) and interpret the despair experiences of my research partners through the theoretical lenses of a revised CBT influenced by theological, cultural, and gerontological insights. Theologically, this revised CBT focuses on the concepts of faith and possibility using Kierkegaard. Culturally, CBT is modified by taking into account the cultural situatedness of Korean American immigrants as people who struggle with acculturation and racism. Gerontologically, this revised CBT applies and modifies CBT for elderly people. In sum, this theologically, culturally, and gerontologically revised CBT approach will focus on elderly Korean American immigrants' profound doubts about God and themselves as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians because their daily experiences of acculturation, racism, aging, and ageism drive them to doubt God's abilities and their worth as human beings. They ask themselves, "Is anything really possible for God? Am I still a person of value?"

Even though Kierkegaard provides theologically insightful perspectives on despair, his concept of despair lacks contextual and sociological viewpoints in that he does not recognize that the despair factors in his concepts of infinitude-finitude and possibility-necessity are contextually and socially constructed and determined. As discussed in Chapter 1, if Erikson's concept of despair is applied to this population, the phenomenon of despair is found in a particular social context with specific issues, such as acculturation, racism, aging, ageism, and religion. In other words, the despair of Korean American elderly Christians is deeply related to the failure to meet the expectations of the host society as well as their own expectations, and their despair has originated from the

gaps between these social and individual expectations and the realities of their lives. Thus, my revised CBT approach also focuses on revealing that their core beliefs are deeply influenced by social factors, such as racism and ageism, and on revealing the negative patterns in their core beliefs about themselves, which are formed by experiencing these socially- and spiritually-imposed burdens. In Erikson's concept of despair, one experiences despair when one fails to reconcile with one's past and to accept one's past and present lives as they are. Thus, by changing core beliefs constructed in and influenced by a person's social context, my pastoral practice using CBT's therapeutic lenses focuses on guiding Korean American elderly Christians to reconcile and accept their lives as they have lived them and to defend their dignity against all social discrimination, aging, and spiritual issues.

This revised CBT regards the despair of Korean American elderly Christians as a starting point of faith as well as a disease unto death and as an element through which this population enters into deeper faith. This revised CBT is a possibility-acceptance-oriented pastoral lens, drawing on Kierkegaard's concept of possibility as the antidote to despair and Erikson's concept of despair, thus emphasizing the possibility for this population of seeking the meaning of their lives as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians and the acceptance of their lives as they are.

1. Basic Theoretical Background of CBT

In this section, I explore the basic theoretical background of CBT, focusing on REBT, CT, and DBT. CBT is mainly based on the theory that individuals' interpretations of environmental stimuli and their resulting emotions and behaviors stem from cognitive

factors.⁴²⁹ CBT looks for the reasons for undesirable affect and behaviors in “maladaptive thoughts, schemas, or information-processing styles.”⁴³⁰ Albert Ellis emphasizes the importance of “*cognitive modification*” for emotional and behavioral change.⁴³¹ Aaron T. Beck, adopting Ellis’s basic theory, has defined irrationality as “the cognitive structures that precipitate uncomfortable feelings and inappropriate behaviors.”⁴³²

As described in Chapter 1, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) endeavors to help people improve their emotional and behavioral functioning through “profound philosophical changes” that are qualitatively different from simple positivity and optimism.⁴³³ According to REBT, people are not just disturbed by external stimuli but they also cause and sustain their own dysfunctional cognitions, emotions, and behaviors.⁴³⁴ For example, people learn their own value systems from their families, their societies, and their cultures, but, at the same time, as agents they create their own value systems and frequently cause many of their emotional disturbances themselves.⁴³⁵ In this regard, the core value systems of Korean American elderly Christians are constructed by and in their social contexts as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians. Their cultural location includes both Korean and American cultural backgrounds and a combination of

⁴²⁹ Forman and Herbert, “New Directions in Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Acceptance-Based Therapies,” 77.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Yost et al., *Group Cognitive Therapy: A Treatment Approach for Depressed Older Adults*, 8.

⁴³² Ibid., 9.

⁴³³ Ellis and MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 16.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁴³⁵ Ellis, *Overcoming Destructive Beliefs, Feelings, and Behaviors: New Directions for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy*, 91-92.

Confucianism and pragmatism. So, a pastoral practice for this population needs to consider their cultural duality, and pastoral caregivers need to be culturally flexible.

“Disputing” is the most popular technique in REBT. Disputing helps clients make a judgment about their belief systems.⁴³⁶ It is based on the premise that most of us do not recognize how deeply we are influenced by our own belief systems when reacting to activating experiences and how much more intense we make our irrational thinking systems in our daily lives.⁴³⁷ Ellis presents four disputing skills to help clients test their belief systems: functional disputes, empirical disputes, logical disputes, and philosophical disputes. Functional disputes involve asking questions such as, “Is it helping you?” or “How is continuing to think this way (or behave this way, or feel this way) affecting your life?”⁴³⁸ These questions are designed to help clients recognize that their belief systems are not helpful for accomplishing their goals. Empirical disputing might mean asking questions like, “Where is the evidence?” “Where is the proof that this is accurate?” and “Where is it written?” in order to show clients that their belief systems are not consistent with their social circumstances.⁴³⁹ Logical disputes focus on clients’ “illogical leaps,” which are represented by *should* statements, through asking questions such as, “How does it follow that just because you’d like this thing to be true and it would be very convenient, it *should* be?” and “Where is the logic that Y *must* follow X?”⁴⁴⁰ Philosophical disputes look for positive aspects of clients’ lives in order to change clients’ indulgence in negative thinking by asking questions like, “Despite the fact that things will

⁴³⁶ Ellis and MacLaren, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy: A Therapist's Guide*, 58.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 64.

probably not go the way you want some/most of the time in this area, can you still derive some satisfaction from your life?”⁴⁴¹

Beck et al. argue that depressed people maintain their negative thoughts because of their negative schemas, even though their negative thoughts cause various problematic influences on their lives.⁴⁴² They define *schema* as follows:

An individual selectively attends to specific stimuli, combines them in a pattern, and conceptualizes the situation. Although different persons may conceptualize the same situation in different ways, a particular person tends to be consistent in his responses to similar types of events. Relatively stable cognitive patterns form the basis for the regularity of interpretations of a particular set of situations. The term “schema” designates these stable cognitive patterns.⁴⁴³

According to Beck’s definition, a cognitive schema is a cognitive structure by which people interpret themselves, the world, and the future. Once a schema is activated by a particular circumstance, people collect, choose, differentiate, and code the information they get from the circumstance into cognitions and review their experiences through the lens of the schema.⁴⁴⁴

Judith Beck argues that the cognitive beliefs model of Cognitive Therapy (CT) consist of two dimensions, core beliefs and intermediate beliefs, and automatic thoughts derive from these two types of belief.⁴⁴⁵ To Beck, core beliefs are the deepest level of belief and consist of “one’s most central ideas about the self.”⁴⁴⁶ She contends that some authors identify core beliefs with schemas, but Aaron Beck differentiates core beliefs

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁴² Beck et al., *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, 11.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

⁴⁴⁵ Beck, *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*, 15-16.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 166.

from schemas by saying that “schemas are cognitive structures within the mind, the specific content of which are core beliefs,” and negative core beliefs have two representative categories: helplessness and unlovability.⁴⁴⁷ Judith states that clients tend not to pay attention to information that opposes their core beliefs.⁴⁴⁸

Judith Beck insists that intermediate beliefs exist between core beliefs and automatic thoughts and consist of conditional assumptions, beliefs, and rules that the patient has developed from her core beliefs and that reflect the common and recurrent themes in her automatic thoughts.⁴⁴⁹ The patient may have positive and/or negative assumptions in order to cope with her core beliefs.⁴⁵⁰ According to Judith, automatic thoughts are “a stream of thinking that coexist with a more manifest stream of thought,” “the actual words or images that go through a person’s mind,” and “the most superficial level of cognition.”⁴⁵¹ Automatic thoughts are usually expressed in the interpretation of a situation and influence one’s subsequent emotions, behaviors, and physiological reactions.⁴⁵² There are three types of automatic thoughts that are distinguished by their validity and their utility. The first type is automatic thoughts that are distorted, the most common type. This distortion occurs in spite of objective and contrary evidence.⁴⁵³ The second type is correct thoughts, but the patient’s conclusions from the automatic thoughts

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 16, 75.

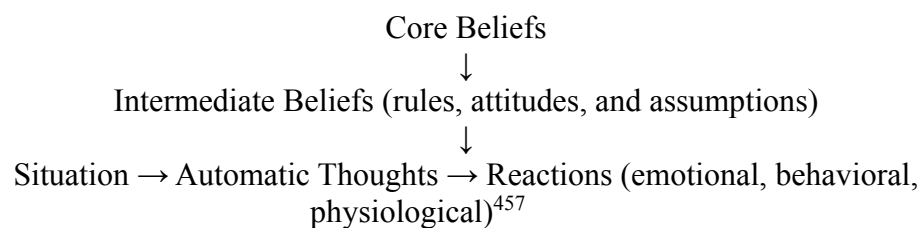
⁴⁵² Ibid., 75.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 77.

are distorted.⁴⁵⁴ The third type is automatic thoughts that are accurate, but the result of these automatic thoughts is dysfunctional.⁴⁵⁵ People tend to believe that their automatic thoughts are factual without appraisal.

Judith Beck says that core and intermediate beliefs are constructed when people try to understand their environments during childhood and to organize their experiences in a consistent way.⁴⁵⁶ This endeavor to understand their environments and experiences leads people to have certain beliefs. The usual therapeutic process of CT is to examine automatic thoughts, then move to intermediate beliefs, and finally reveal what kind of core beliefs the client has. Judith Beck shows how core beliefs, intermediate beliefs, and automatic thoughts are interrelated in Figure 1. As seen in the diagram, automatic thoughts, which are formed out of intermediate beliefs, are activated by certain situations and produce particular emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses. In order to understand the intermediate beliefs that form automatic thoughts, the therapist needs to explore core beliefs.

Figure 1. Interrelationship of Core Beliefs, Intermediate Beliefs, and Automatic Thoughts



⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 18. I changed this figure.

My pastoral practice using CBT's theoretical lens explores the schema of Christian Korean American elderly immigrants. According to CBT, a schema is a cognitive structure by which people interpret themselves, the world, and the future. In my opinion, this population is exposed to social, contextual, and spiritual environments in which they suffer from more distorted schemas than their Korean counterparts in Korea because of acculturation, racism, ageism, and the extrinsic characteristics of Korean American churches.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) is a psychotherapy based on behaviorism and dialectical philosophy designed by Marsha M. Linehan especially to treat those patients who have a chronically suicidal borderline personality disorder (BPD).⁴⁵⁸ This therapy grows out of the tension between CBT's emphasis on change and an emphasis on acceptance.⁴⁵⁹ In DBT, therapy is a dialectical process in which therapists and patients mutually influence one another.⁴⁶⁰ Linehan uses three primary characteristics of dialectics: interrelatedness and wholeness, polarity, and synthesis. First, interrelatedness and wholeness emphasize the interrelationship between a part and the whole to which the part belongs:

The analysis of part of a system is of limited value unless the analysis clearly relates the part to the whole. Thus identity itself is relational, and boundaries between parts are temporary and exist only in relation to the whole; indeed, it is the whole that determines the boundaries.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ Michaela A. Swales and Heidi L. Heard, *Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: Distinctive Features* (New York: Routledge, 2009), ix.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁶¹ Marsha Linehan, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), 31.

From this perspective, an individual is not fully defined in DBT without describing his or her contextual factors.

Second, polarity means that reality consists of internally opposite factors, thesis and antithesis, and new versions of these two factors evolve out of the integration (synthesis) of them.⁴⁶² Applied to psychotherapy, this perspective helps therapists to focus on patients' pathologies as well as patients' wisdom about their own lives, even though patients' capabilities for using their own wisdom are damaged and not accessible.⁴⁶³ This leads therapists to focus on the *here and now*, which is compatible with CBT, rather than patients' pasts, because DBT is interested in the clients' current dialectical processes between pathology and wisdom.⁴⁶⁴ This perspective also helps patients to view both the black and white sides of their reality and not to disregard any part of it.⁴⁶⁵

Third, synthesis means continuous change which happens as a result of the tension between thesis and antithesis. Thesis and antithesis are reconciled and recreated in a continual process of synthesis (change), which has in itself polar forces, and the new tension between the new thesis and the new antithesis produces a new synthesis.⁴⁶⁶ In this continuous process, therapy has "an ever-present dialectical tension" in which a patient has a temporary balance between attempting to maintain herself as she is and attempting to change herself.⁴⁶⁷ In the dialectical tension of the therapeutic dialogue and relationship,

⁴⁶² Ibid., 32.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 34.

“therapeutic dialectics” refers to “change by persuasion and by making use of the oppositions” that exist between therapists and patients.⁴⁶⁸

Linehan explains that the most fundamental and distinctive characteristic of DBT from traditional CBT is to accept patients as they are while trying to change them.⁴⁶⁹ By “acceptance” she means, “the therapist’s willingness to find the inherent wisdom and ‘goodness’ of the current moment and the participants in it, and to enter fully into the experience without judgment, blame, or manipulation.”⁴⁷⁰ In other words, therapists have to equally consider a patient’s capabilities and deficiencies, synthesizing acceptance and the demand for change.⁴⁷¹ Linehan also emphasizes the importance of teaching patients to accept themselves as they are and their world as it is in the moment, as well as teaching them behavioral skills to change their dysfunctional behaviors.⁴⁷² Therefore, techniques for acceptance are as important as techniques for change in DBT.⁴⁷³

2. Gerontological Considerations in CBT

According to Yost et al., elderly people experience various cognitive distortions because of their limited time, few social contacts, lower energy levels, reminiscing, pondering of past mistakes, current difficulties, and gloomy futures.⁴⁷⁴ Yost and his colleagues say that all of these factors contribute to elderly adults’ falling into three

⁴⁶⁸ Alec L. Miller, Jill H. Rathus, and Marsha Linehan, *Dialectical Behavior Therapy with Suicidal Adolescents* (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 39.

⁴⁶⁹ Linehan, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*, 19.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Yost et al., *Group Cognitive Therapy: A Treatment Approach for Depressed Older Adults*, 27.

categories of cognitive distortions: “unrealistic expectations of themselves and old age, exaggerated meanings given to daily events, and changing value systems.”⁴⁷⁵

Yost and his colleagues argue that elderly people have a tendency to have unrealistic expectations of themselves and old age because old age is expected to be the time of wisdom, and this expectation leads them to think they are not adequate in that they cannot adjust to their new physical, social, emotional, and financial environments as much as they want to.⁴⁷⁶ Elderly people also have negative cognitions about their own aging based on unrealistic comparisons with their own younger periods and other younger people.⁴⁷⁷ Elderly people spend time experiencing unpleasant daily events that cause cognitive distortions, such as visiting physicians, settling financial issues, and dealing with family losses, and the absence of improvement in these problem areas makes them think their futures are hopeless.⁴⁷⁸ The traditional values elderly people have had during their lifetimes that have given them positive self-esteem, such as, “you are only of value to society if you work,” “you have to be independent to be a man,” and “keep a stiff upper lip and get on with the job,” potentially influence their cognitive distortions because their lives after retirement bring them a sense of loss of productivity and autonomy.⁴⁷⁹

Wong and Chong recommend that therapists use older adults’ positive past experiences, although CBT focuses on the present, so older adults can recognize their

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 28.

own coping abilities through them and can explore what they can control rather than what they cannot.⁴⁸⁰ Wong and Chong list five reasons why using reminiscences is useful:

First, many older clients want to talk about the past and resent being stopped. Second, clients feel the counselor cares and listens. They feel respected and become more receptive to the counselor and the counseling process. Third, recalling past happy or experiences often generate joy and a positive mood. Fourth, reminiscences may be taken as a reworking of the client's life span; and might take the client toward a more abstract level of cognitive intervention. Finally, it may eliminate their feelings of uselessness.⁴⁸¹

Similarly, Gallagher-Thomson and Thomson propose an optional technique for modifying unhelpful core beliefs: a core belief life review. According to them, this technique is helpful for older patients who do not respond to other techniques, who have a shared opinion with the therapist that they need to explore their core beliefs for more improvement in spite of their current improvement, and who have not benefited from their changing of unhelpful thoughts.⁴⁸² The core beliefs life review form is a useful tool for modifying the unhelpful core beliefs of older patients. The core beliefs life review form consists of four columns: life stage, core belief, supporting evidence, and contrary evidence.⁴⁸³ By using this form, older patients can identify and think about what life events molded their unhelpful core beliefs and how they can respond to their unhelpful core beliefs differently.

When various cognitive techniques are used in CBT sessions for older adults, as James proposes, the therapist should be careful with trying to change older patients'

⁴⁸⁰ PYK Wong and AML Chong, "Indigenising Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: Counseling Older Chinese People with Multiple Diseases," *Asian Journal of Gerontology & Geriatrics* 2, no. 2 (2007): 103.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁸² Dolores Gallagher-Thomson and Larry W. Thomson, *Treating Late-Life Depression: A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 138.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 147.

negative thoughts because most of their negative thoughts include reasonable reasons and fractional truth.⁴⁸⁴ For this reason, James suggests that it is often better when addressing older patients' negative thoughts to distinguish "between helpful and unhelpful thoughts, rather than rational and irrational ones."⁴⁸⁵ For example, if an older patient thinks, "I can't do anything correctly," the helpful part of this negative thought would be, "It stops me from trying to do things beyond my abilities," and the unhelpful part of this negative thoughts would be, "I feel paralyzed, and my life is so boring because I don't do anything. And this makes me feel worse!"⁴⁸⁶

3. Possibility-Acceptance-Oriented CBT

To provide optimal pastoral care for Korean American elderly Christians, I adapt CBT to their theological, cultural, and gerontological particularities and propose a possibility-acceptance-oriented model of CBT that incorporates the concepts of Kierkegaard and Erikson. As I argued previously, all my research participants suffered from "necessity's despair" because of their various needs as elderly immigrant Christians. Thus, a task for this population is to focus on the antidote to necessity's despair, i.e., possibility, according to Kierkegaard. In addition, drawing on Erikson's framework, people despair when they cannot reconcile with their pasts and, as a result, regret their pasts. As seen in Chapter 3, several research partners regretted their pasts and their choices to immigrate. So, a pastoral practice for them needs to focus on guiding them to reconcile with and accept their lives as they have been.

⁴⁸⁴ Ian Andrew James, *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Older People: Interventions for Those with and Without Dementia* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010), 109.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

Traditional CBT focuses on changing negative core beliefs because its therapeutic ground is that negative emotions and behaviors come from negative core beliefs.

Possibility-Acceptance-Oriented CBT presupposes that the core beliefs of Christian Korean American elderly immigrants are intense doubts about themselves, which are constructed due to experiences with immigration, aging, and issues in their churches. These are doubts about their identities and self-worth and their hopes for better spiritual environments. When their doubts are intensified by certain experiences and circumstances, like acculturation issues, racism, ageism, and issues in their churches, their core beliefs of doubts about themselves, the society to which they belong, and their futures are intensified. The expected impacts of their core belief on their identities are lowered self-esteem and feelings of shame, helplessness, uselessness, and hopelessness.

To care for these doubts, I combine the dialectic of pathology-wisdom in DBT with the polar pairs of finitude-infinity and necessity-possibility from Kierkegaard. Synthesis in DBT is like the synthesis of necessity and the possibilities for the self in Kierkegaard. By “synthesis,” Kierkegaard means that the self needs to integrate its negative pole (finitude and necessity) with its positive pole (infinity and possibility) in order to become itself. Applied to Korean-American elderly Christians, these persons have very intensified characteristics of finitude and necessity caused by immigration, aging, and issues related to Korean American churches. Their linguistic and cultural finitude, acculturation stress, negative experiences caused by racism and ageism, and disappointments with the extrinsic characteristics of Korean American churches need to be combined with their infinity and possibility. In spite of the challenges of their finitude and necessity as immigrants, elderly people, and Christians, to overcome despair

they need to seek and develop their spiritualities in the midst of finitude and necessity and to have faith in the possibility that God is still working for them and that they can continue to sustain human dignity in the face of challenges.

For a theologically contextualized CBT practice, I would like to add one more dispute to Ellis's four disputing skills: spiritual dispute. Using spiritual dispute, pastoral caregivers would help the target population test their faith in God's presence and power and their faith in the possibility of seeking meanings and maintaining human dignity and the image of God as elderly immigrant Christians, in spite of the challenges of acculturation, racism, ageism, aging, and various issues in Korean American churches. Pastoral caregivers would ask questions such as, "Where is (was or will be) God in your experience of these challenges?" "What is (was or will be) God doing for you in your difficult situation?" and "Where was God and what was God doing for you when you went through acculturation stress, racism, negative attitudes toward the aged and aging, and the problems in your church?"

From the perspective of DBT on the necessity for the synthesis of pathology and wisdom, Korean American elderly Christians suffer from the pathological factors of the challenges mentioned above, but they have overcome these challenges using their own wisdom and resilience. As a guiding practice, based on Hiltner, pastoral practices for this population need to use an educative guidance method that places more emphasis on utilizing the wisdom the population has used for resilience as well as guiding them to use eternal resources in order to evoke their wisdom. As I noted in Chapter 1, this guidance practice leads pastoral caregivers to respect the life experiences and resilient power of this population and to pay attention to the wisdom they have used to survive in the United

States. Thus, the main purpose and techniques of my revised pastoral CBT approach focus on guiding the population to recognize their past resilience and allowing them to travel through their past and current experiences of resiliency in order to reframe their negative core beliefs, schemas, and automatic thoughts into more realistic, not just positive, viewpoints of their selves and lives by considering both finitude and infinitude, possibility and necessity, and pathology and wisdom. Moreover, this guiding practice encourages the population to resist social prejudices against immigrants and the aged, and it leads pastoral caregivers to educate the population to read their realities alternatively and to understand how the norms, stereotypes, values, and attitudes of the dominant culture have distorted their core beliefs about themselves, the world, and the future.

Acceptance is a very importance concept and factor in Possibility-Acceptance-Oriented CBT. Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the acceptance of necessity in order to overcome possibility's despair and of the acceptance of possibility in order to overcome necessity's despair. Likewise, in Erikson's theory, ego integrity is accomplished by accepting what has occurred in one's own life as inevitable and satisfying. Erikson argues that ego integrity defends an elderly person's human dignity against all kinds of issues he or she might experience. Similarly, in REBT, Ellis emphasizes unconditional self-acceptance of one's own essence in any performance and one's external traits. Thus, my Possibility-Acceptance-Oriented CBT practice focuses on guiding the target population to accept the events of their lives as unavoidable and satisfying and to accept their selves and essences, even though they continue to experience acculturation issues, racism, ageism, and problems in Korean American churches, in addition to challenging them to change their destructive core beliefs,

schemas, and automatic thoughts. Thus, the practice should focus on guiding Christian Korean American elderly immigrants to accept their pasts and their past choices as they were and as necessary, and, next, to accept their past and current selves. In directing them to acknowledge the discrimination imposed by social injustices, the practice needs to also guide them to accept themselves despite discrimination and to realize that they still carry the image of God and the possibility to become selves who synthesize possibility and necessity and balance between these two poles.

Gerontologically contextualized CBT likewise focuses on positive past experiences of resilience while maintaining CBT's here-and-now focus. Even though my research partners experienced various difficulties after immigrating, all of them overcame their difficulties due to their resilient capabilities. Pastoral caregivers should help elderly Korean American immigrants pay attention to what they have accomplished as a foundation for considering the possibility pole. As Wong and Chong argue, pastoral caregivers should use reminiscence as a way of respecting the wisdom of this target population and guiding them to rework, re-evaluate, and reconcile with their lives.

Chapter V

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of my dissertation and offer recommendations for my research participants, Korean American pastors, and myself. I also give suggestions for future studies of elderly Korean American Christian immigrants. My counsel to my research participants includes living full lives in the present while enhancing hope for the future and actively using their wisdom. I suggest that Korean American pastors practice pastoral ministry *with* Korean American elderly Christians, not just pastoral ministry *for* the population and that they use grief ministry as a means by which the population can find hope and meaning in their current lives and accept their past and current lives. To myself, I suggest that I study and disseminate knowledge of acculturation issues to Korean American churches, reflect more on the Korean American context of aging, and live a life with fewer regrets. I also suggest three research themes for future study: the ageism of elderly people toward the younger generation, the ethical issues of elderly people, and spiritual losses during the aging process.

A. Summary

When I interviewed my six research partners, I learned that their lives were much more intense than I expected. The mixture of their hardships and successes filled their narratives, causing them to have many mixed emotions within their daily lives. I could see how hard they had worked to survive and do well in the U.S., and in particular, I recognized how hard they had worked to provide their children with good educations. Survival and their children were the primary foci of their attention throughout their lives.

Some of them were proud of their lives in the U.S., but at the same time they missed their lives in Korea and expressed regrets regarding their decisions to immigrate.

The research partners' negative experiences with their churches, aging, and loss of friends resulted in a lack of hope for themselves, the world, and the future. One research participant was limited in the development of her spirituality due to her physical condition and her responsibilities for others. Because of their children's lack of appreciation and financial and emotional support, many Korean American elderly immigrants struggled with finding meaning in their lives. Due to limited English proficiency, limited cultural knowledge, racism, responsibilities for others, internalized ageism, and a lack of responsibility for their own lives, they also struggled with a lack of agency. Lastly, some of them failed to accept their lives for what they were by regretting certain parts of their lives.

However, the research partners still maintained hope for themselves, the world, and the future. Their children were important resources for giving them this hope. For some of them, their spirituality was the most important resource for maintaining hope. In terms of spirituality, faith in meeting family members in heaven provided them with hope for the future and a stimulus to live more faithful lives on earth. Despite negative experiences in their churches, Korean American churches were still important resources for their meaning and hope. They had overcome their limited English proficiency and were successful in their business and work lives by utilizing their talents. They also overcame their physical limitations by using wisdom, finding meaning and positive aspects in aging, and maintaining their health. Some of them found meaning from gaining rewards for their hard work and from providing better educational opportunities for and

witnessing the success of their children. Some of the participants confronted their limited agency by using their agency to reconcile with others and protect their families. They accepted that they were old and death was close to them, but their stories were filled with sad and anxious feelings about it.

Why did the research participants experience these intense lives as Christian Korean American elderly immigrants? As discussed in previous chapters, they all went through acculturation and the stresses that came with it. Even after spending several decades in the U.S., they had still not become accustomed to their lives as immigrants. Their immigration to the U.S. had totally changed their lives. Their limited English skills and cultural maladaptation were always big burdens on their shoulders, and racism was a serious threat to their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-beings. Socially discriminative notions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the aged and aging diminished their identities and the meanings of their later years. In addition, their unmet spiritual thirsts and disappointments with their churches led them to feel that they were spiritual orphans. Furthermore, the research participants expressed their struggles with and regrets over parts of their pasts. Erikson argues that people despair when they cannot accept their pasts as they are and experience regrets.

All the experiences mentioned above are considered experiences of despair in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Kierkegaard argues that a person despairs when his whole personality doubts himself due to gaps between his ideal self and his real self. The Korean American elderly Christians in this study immigrated to the U.S. with expectations of success and a better education for their children. However, their real lives were different from their expectations, and this gap between their expectations and their

realities led them to doubt themselves. When they experienced acculturation and acculturation stress, they realized that there were many gaps between their socially expected selves and their real selves. Racism and ageism showed them the widest and deepest gaps between their real selves and their socially imposed and damaged selves. At first, when they recognized these gaps, they despaired over acculturation issues and discrimination. However, they later began to despair over themselves because they could not do anything to avoid these issues and discriminations. In addition to this, their spiritual needs and issues within their churches led them to realize that there were many wide gaps between their expectations for their churches and reality.

Kierkegaard calls despair a sin because, for him, despair is a choice made by the human will, and it causes a person to reject God's forgiveness even though everything is possible for God. However, I argue that my research participants' despair is not a sin but suffering caused by the inevitable process of acculturation and the socially imposed oppressions of racism and ageism. I also argue that God uses God's possibility and power in people's suffering by participating in the suffering and suffering with humans, rather than solving people's issues. Therefore, my practice of pastoral care for the elderly Korean American immigrant population focuses on God's co-suffering and possibilities for them.

If I expand Kierkegaard's concept of despair to Korean American churches, my research participants and, in my opinion, most Korean American Christians, despair is due to their necessities. Due to their lowered self-esteems, their yearnings to be acknowledged by others, and their unconscious desires to be important people in their churches and communities, they look to their Christian faiths to meet these needs and

desires. The possibility of becoming their true selves, who seek spirituality and accept their lives as they are, has been impaired due to a lack of recognition from others. This despair occupies Korean American churches and deprives congregants of the desire to grow spiritually out of an intrinsic motivation based on their Christian faith. This is why Korean American churches are regarded as community centers where Korean immigrants are refreshed by sharing common language, foods, culture, and experiences as immigrants, rather than as spiritual sanctuaries.

To Kierkegaard, the antidote for despair is possibility. Even though Christian Korean American elderly immigrants experience various issues, they still have the possibility of becoming themselves, and they can realize this possibility only when they have faith that, for God, everything is possible. Kierkegaard argues that people should synthesize within themselves their necessities and their possibilities and have a balance between their realities and their spiritualities. People may suffer due to various issues, but, at the same time, they still have God's image in them and human dignity.

Therefore, I asked a question about this situation: How can pastoral caregivers guide Christian Korean American elderly immigrants to confront their despair and maintain a balance between their necessities and possibilities? Using Kierkegaard, Erikson, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), I proposed a theologically, culturally, and gerontologically contextualized CBT for this population. This CBT is a possibility-acceptance-oriented pastoral practice. I think pastoral care for the target population should be possibility-oriented because their core beliefs have been distorted by social prejudice, discrimination, and acculturation issues, causing them to regard themselves as defective, hopeless, and inferior. While traditional CBT emphasizes identifying

problematic core beliefs formed by repetitive negative thinking patterns, my argument is that the goal of reframing their core beliefs is to guide them to find the possibilities of maintaining their dignities and the image of God as human beings by confronting these challenges and, theologically, by becoming selves who seek God and spirituality. Based on Kierkegaard and Erikson, I believe this is a way to synthesize their pathologies and wisdom and their necessities and possibilities.

I propose an acceptance-oriented CBT even though traditional CBT focuses on changing problematic thoughts. I found that my research participants struggled with their pasts and the decisions they had made in the past. They cannot change the past, so the only way of reconciling with their pasts and their past decisions is to re-interpret, reframe, and accept them as inevitable and sufficient.

B. Suggestions

1. Suggestions for My Research Participants

My first piece of advice for my research participants is that they maintain their hope for the future and heaven, but, at the same time, live fully their current lives. As I mentioned above, their hope for the future was not independent from their present lives. Their hope for the future enhances the meaning of and hope for their current lives, and this hope enables them to confront their current challenges. This future-tense hope enables them to share what they have with others and to contribute to their churches. Therefore, their hope for the future should be enhanced in their spiritual communities, and this is deeply related to the ministry of their churches and all their members.

Second, I would like to suggest that they need to find and use the wisdom they have already developed during their lives to accept their past and current lives as they

were and as they are. From my research analysis, I found that, despite their lack of hope, meaning, and agency and their failure to accept certain aspects of their past and current lives, they still have resilient wisdom. They have overcome intense hardships since they immigrated to the U.S. Even though they have experienced discrimination and the loss of human dignity, they have maintained their identities as Korean American Christians. Even though they have struggled with issues accompanying aging, they have found that their lives still have meaning. Their wisdom encourages them to have new perspectives on their lives in spite of these challenges, to find their own worth and values, and to focus on the positive aspects of aging in spite of the negative social perspectives of aging and racism.

2. Suggestions for Korean American Pastors

My first suggestion for Korean American pastors is a pastoral ministry *with* Korean American elderly Christians, not just *for* the population. This suggestion comes from my impression of them as sheep of Jesus, the Great Shepherd, and as little shepherds. When I thought about their lives, God was present in them as their Shepherd, but I also felt that, following the Shepherd, each of my research participants, as little shepherds, had journeyed through the wildernesses of immigration, aging, and their spiritual journeys. Sacrificing themselves, they have protected their families, their identities, their faiths, hope, meaning, agency, and themselves. Based on this impression, I would like to make a suggestion to Korean American pastors that the elderly people they care for are not just their sheep, but rather shepherds who already have life maps for the wilderness and who know what they need to do in the wildernesses of life. This means pastors need to be curious about the various experiences of the elderly Korean

American immigrant population and give them opportunities to use their own agency and spirituality in service to their churches. This ministry is not just a pastoral ministry *for* this population, but a pastoral ministry *with* this population. This is a guiding ministry in which the pastors guide the little shepherds to look back on their lives and see how they have protected their lives, families, agency, meaning, and hope by using the protection of the Great Shepherd. Pastors encourage them to become spiritual elders in their churches, letting their experiences and wisdom flow out from their inner selves to the outer world. As a result, pastoral care with these little shepherds will always give pastoral caregivers the paradoxical identities of caregivers for this population and care receivers from them at the same time.

Second, I suggest that Korean American pastors provide elderly Korean American Christians with grief ministry.⁴⁸⁷ As observed in the previous chapters, my research partners suffered from regretting certain aspects of their pasts and losing hope, meaning, agency, health, and human relationships. When I interviewed my research partners, I witnessed intense emotional responses from them when they shared with me their regrets about their pasts. Chulsoo and Mija sobbed in front of me, and I saw tears run down Minsoo's face. Soojin's facial expression showed how much she regretted her mistake in her relationship with her mother-in-law. If their regrets were the most difficult despair in their lives, how might I help them overcome this despair? When I thought about this issue, one word came into my mind: *grieving*, rather than regretting. The idea of a ministry of guiding them to fully grieve their pasts and losses and to start new lives inspired me. This

⁴⁸⁷ I also briefly mentioned Sullender's perspectives on grief in my article. See Yong Hwan Kim, "How Can Christian Community Help Older Adults in Despair?" *Journal of Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America* 2 (2010): 443-85.

is why I propose providing grief ministries for elderly Korean Americans.

For a grief ministry addressing the regrets and various losses of this population, I draw on the perspective of R. Scott Sullender on grieving various losses of the aging process. According to him, grief is an emotional reaction to future expected losses as well as past and current losses: “The human emotional response to loss... grief may be triggered in response to an anticipated or perceived loss, as well as to actual loss.”⁴⁸⁸ He argues that grief is “the sensation of longing, sorrowing, and yearning,” yet it is also a more complex process which is accompanied by other emotional responses, such as anger, depression, despair, guilt, anxiety and fear: “the *grief process* is a collection of feelings and emotions, of which grief is the most dominant, but not the only emotion.”⁴⁸⁹ Thus, grief ministry deals with all kinds of human emotional responses caused by losses.

Sullender argues that loss and grief are inevitable factors of life generally, but they are more prominent in later life specifically and, thus, how elderly people grieve determines their quality of life. According to Sullender,

Loss is more subtle and everpresent in later life. Loss is with us all the time of course, but in later life it seems as though there are fewer big dramatic losses and more of the gradual, subtle, constant losses. Most of the losses of later life are anticipated or should be... grief is everpresent. Older people are almost in a constant state of grief. ... Grief is a constant companion in the later years. The well-adjusted person in later life will learn to make friends with grief. In fact, I would argue that if we want to age well through the second half of life we must become good grievers. We must learn to work through our ever-present grief.⁴⁹⁰

Sullender argues that grieving guides grievers to go through the grief process and reach “the other side of sorrow,” while recapturing emotional resilience and investing

⁴⁸⁸ R. Scott Sullender, *Losses in Later Life: A New Way of Walking with God*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1999), 25.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 14.

themselves in “new loves, new identities, new attachments.”⁴⁹¹ These newly acquired loves, identities, and attachments enable the griever to find new meanings, new interpretations of life, new hope, new agency, and the emotional capability to accept their past, current, and future lives.

Grief ministry would encourage my target population to reflect on their past and current lives, resolve their regrets about their pasts, re-interpret them as meaningful, and find new identities, new hope, new meanings, and new agency in their lives. As immigrants, this population needs to reminisce about their pasts in their home country and their difficult lives as immigrants in the U.S. As elderly people, they need to remember various parenting memories, to let negative memories about them go, and to think about anticipated losses. As Christians, they need to remember God’s occasional invisibility and God’s seeming incapability of saving them from their sufferings as well as God’s grace and presence in their whole lives. Grieving and re-interpreting their lives, remembering God, and finding new hope, meaning, and agency will provide them with opportunities to revise their negative core beliefs about themselves, the world, the future, and God and to reconstruct their cognitive schema. As a result, they will accept their past and current lives and will be ready to accept whatever their futures bring them.

Presenting Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection as an example for how to grieve loss and sorrow and how to maintain faith in later life, Sullender asks two questions: “How are we able to embrace grief work?” and “What enables us to suffer well?”⁴⁹² He finds the answer in the story of Jesus’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, which Jesus visited to pray before his crucifixion. He argues:

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 157.

the Garden of Gethsemane story is also a story of great faith. Jesus had a faith that sustained him and strengthened him in spite of his fears, his doubts, and the anticipatory grief he was experiencing. Faith sustained Jesus and somehow enabled him to enter and eventually transcend his loss.⁴⁹³

In the garden, Jesus believed that God was with him. Due to this belief, faith, and trust, Jesus did not avoid his death on the cross and went through the “emotional suffering” of grief.⁴⁹⁴ If we have faith and trust that God is with us and the life God gave us is good, we can grieve our losses without avoiding them. Sullender states:

Faith as trust refers to our trusting attitude toward God... Faith as trust manifests itself as a trusting attitude toward life, toward others, toward oneself, toward the providential events of life. Faith as trust allows us to enter life in all of its fullness with an experiential confidence that “it is good” (Gen 1:25, 31).⁴⁹⁵

Just as Kierkegaard proposes that believing everything is possible for God is the antidote for despair, Sullender suggests that believing “life is good” is the factor that enables grievers to endure the emotional suffering of grieving and “to embrace their pain, to fully experience their grief feelings, and thus, to swiftly pass through the transition, reinvesting themselves in new attachments and in a new stage of life.”⁴⁹⁶ Faith in the God who gives us good lives and has been with us in the valleys of suffering is the core of grief ministry.

If grievers pass through the tunnel of mourning believing that life is good because of God, their grieving activity builds mental and spiritual maturity and “mental and emotional flexibility,” which enables them to accept their past and current lives as they

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 165.

were and as they are.⁴⁹⁷ Sullender suggests,

We should not “borrow from the future” by living in fear of the next life stage. Neither should we live in the past by “idolizing” the life stage just completed. Live fully in the present. Enjoy it. Embrace it. Look for God there. However, to fully embrace the present, we must regularly let go of the past. And one of the most significant losses that we must periodically let go of is the loss of our youth.⁴⁹⁸

Sullender’s affirmation, “Live fully in the present. Enjoy it. Embrace it. Look for God there,” suggests a way for elderly Korean American Christians to experience hope in their current lives. Criticizing the traditional pastoral theology of hope as focusing only on an eschatological future, Duane Bidwell emphasizes the dual tenses of hope for terminally ill children: the present and the future.⁴⁹⁹ In his research, terminally ill children talked about their hopes for their lives in terms of “specific locations and situations.”⁵⁰⁰ According to Bidwell, the children always experienced hope in the here and now “in anticipatory ways.”⁵⁰¹ Combining these two perspectives, grief ministry for the elderly focuses on elderly people’s current lives and helps them find meaning, hope, and agency in their specific places and relationships.

For an effective grief ministry, Sullender recommends that pastoral caregivers and pastors develop grief rituals to guide grievers to grieve well: “Rituals provide the guidance that encourages people to grieve. Rituals teach people how to grieve,” and

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁹⁹ Duane R. Bidwell, “Eschatology and Childhood Hope: Reflections from Work in Progress,” *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 20, no. 2 (2010): 111.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 120.

“Rituals facilitate grief.”⁵⁰² He argues that the grief process is a dynamic synthesis between “remembering and forgetting,” “pain and mitigation,” and “confrontation and comfort,” and effective rituals provide griever with opportunities for synthesizing both poles of this process.⁵⁰³ On the other hand, in my opinion, regret includes only one pole, remembering, pain, and confrontation, and this causes people who regret to despair. If Sullender’s perspective on the grief process is viewed in light of Kierkegaard’s perspective on despair, regret belongs to the category of necessity’s despair in that remembering, pain, and confrontation belong to human necessity, and this prevents people who regret from experiencing the human possibilities of forgetting, mitigation, and comfort. In order to effectively facilitate the synthesis of the two poles, Sullender maintains that effective grief rituals need to “enable people to release or to act out their grief feelings,” to facilitate grief by providing “a safe structure in which to emotionally let go,” and to provide “meanings that make sense out of the experience of loss” and “words that reassure us, words that provide hope for tomorrow, but, most of all, words that make sense of raw emotion.”⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, pastoral caregivers and pastors ought to prepare grief rituals for Korean American elderly Christians through which they can release the emotions associated with their regrets and loss of meaning, hope, agency, and youth in order to find meaning in their lives.

3. Suggestions to Myself

My first suggestion to myself is to do more research about the relationship between

⁵⁰² R. Scott Sullender, *Grief and Growth: Pastoral Resources for Emotional and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 148-49.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 157.

acculturation and the spirituality of Korean American churches. Through the current research, one of the most important lessons I received related to acculturation. I had tried to understand Korean Americans broadly and Korean American Christians specifically, but I always felt that there was a wall that prevented me from recognizing the factors that differentiate Korean Americans from Koreans. I think I found an answer in acculturation and acculturation stress. These burdens have always been on my shoulders and now I can identify with other Korean Americans, in that I have also experienced the process of acculturation and its stress. This understanding gives me great flexibility for understanding perplexing events in my church that previously I interpreted and responded to negatively, and I feel I now have a more open mind toward Korean American churches. My newly acquired understanding about acculturation gives me more emotional and spiritual room than before. As a result, I feel a mission to spread my knowledge of the relationship between acculturation and the spirituality of Korean American churches, since I have met a lot of Korean American pastors who struggle with the impacts of acculturation. I hope my continued research on this subject will be a helpful resource for pastors.

The second suggestion to myself is to study aging in Korean American contexts. Even before I came to the U.S., aging was a long-term interest of mine, but my knowledge was limited. Moreover, I found that primary materials about the subject have been based mainly on non-Korean American contexts, and this limited focus has been a big challenge. Particularly in the field of theology, there is an evident need for research into aging in Korean American contexts, so I want to study practical theology applied to gerontology in Korean American contexts and expand my understanding of the subject.

My third suggestion for myself is to do my best for my family. When I watched some of my research participants crying during our interviews, and when I listened to their stories again while I transcribed them, one subject drew my attention and one important question came into my mind: how to avoid regret. Their broken hearts due to their intense regrets about their pasts alarmed me. I ponder the question, if I cannot avoid regrets entirely, how can I live a life with fewer regrets? Because my participants' regrets were mainly connected to their families, I thought about my own family members, and I changed this question to, how can I protect their smiles and happiness? As the father of two girls and the husband to my wife, am I doing my best? These questions seriously challenged me, and I am still asking myself these questions. The tears of my research participants made me ask important life questions and caused me to look back on my life. I feel that meditating on these questions will help me make a lot of changes in my life and with my family, especially to love them more.

4. Suggestions for Future Study

I propose three areas for future research on aging.⁵⁰⁵ The first research area I suggest is researching older adults' ageism toward younger generations. As described in Chapter 4, ageism is usually applied to older people and is defined as the negative prejudices of younger generation toward older generations. However, several studies argue that younger generations also suffer from age discrimination and older adults also have discriminative attitudes toward the younger generation. Jack C. Westman calls this

⁵⁰⁵ I briefly mentioned these themes in my article. See Yong Hwan Kim, "How can Christian Community Help Older Adults in Despair?" *Journal of Presbyterian Theological Seminary in America* 2 (2010): 474-76.

age discrimination toward younger generations “juvenile ageism.”⁵⁰⁶ Malcolm Sargeant points out that ageism is experienced by younger workers in the U.K. when they are regarded as less reliable by employers.⁵⁰⁷ Fred Van Tatenhove argues that ageism toward the younger generation exists in the church as well: “Although [ageism] is usually associated with older people, youth can also experience such prejudice and bias, as illustrated by Paul’s counsel to Timothy, ‘Let no one despise your youth’ (1 Tim. 4:12, NIV).”⁵⁰⁸ Even though ageism toward older adults is supposedly the prevalent form of ageism in society and the church, practical theologians and pastors also need to understand the ageism directed from older adults toward younger generations. When pastoral theologians and pastors properly address and deal with mutual ageism, they can accomplish intergenerational harmony in churches and societies.

Second, future theological research on aging needs to pay attention to “the moral praxis of aging itself.”⁵⁰⁹ K. Brynolf Lyon argues that contemporary theology lacks “a religioethical witness of aging” and does not discuss “the ethics of aging.”⁵¹⁰ He maintains that the main ethical topic in theology in relation to the elderly is about how to care for older adults ethically, rather than how the population can live ethical lives.⁵¹¹ This attitude in theology disregards the ethical capabilities of older adults as spiritual

⁵⁰⁶ Jack C. Westman, "Juvenile ageism: Unrecognized Prejudice and Discrimination against the Young," *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 21, no. 4 (1991): 237.

⁵⁰⁷ Malcolm Sargeant, "Young People and Age Discrimination," *E-Journal of International and Comparative LABOUR STUDIES* 2, no. 1 (2013): 2.

⁵⁰⁸ Fred Van Tatenhove, "Evangelical Perspectives," in *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion*, ed. Melvin A. Kimble, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 418.

⁵⁰⁹ K. Brynolf Lyon, *Toward Practical Theology of Aging* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 47.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

leaders in their families, churches, and communities.

To Brynolf, the core of the religioethical duty of aging “require[s] carrying out certain responsibilities to others.”⁵¹² This means that older adults should see themselves as being involved in the world based on “a profound sense of the interconnection of the generations,” thus promoting others and seeking “the fulfillment of others.”⁵¹³ Thus, future research on aging needs to include research on how older people in the church connect with younger generations and “advance the progress of the younger generations in their own love of God and neighbor.”⁵¹⁴ In addition, this research should focus on how the elderly can fulfill their roles as spiritual elders in their faith communities, families, and society.

Third, future research on aging needs to pay attention to older adults’ spiritual losses because “the darkness is a loss of a former way of knowing God.”⁵¹⁵ Even though Sullender deals with various issues of loss in aging, he fails to mention an important dimension of loss, spiritual loss. Henry C. Simmons and Jane Wilson argue that elderly people experience spiritual darkness due to losing familiar ways of knowing God:

There are the agonizing losses and the unexpected graces, the things we thought we knew about God that disappear as life moves on, and the unfamiliar faces of the holy that appear in surprising places. There may be long periods when the God of our childhood disappears, leaving a vacancy that is not filled by any other belief... For example, a woman remembers how in her earlier years she rejoiced in God’s felt presence and had it with her all the time. Then it was gone. She yearned for its return. She was frightened and felt she had lost her way. There seemed to be no one there to help; even the God on whom she had once relied was gone.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 91.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Henry C. Simmons and Jane Wilson, *Soulful Aging: Ministry through the Stages of Adulthood* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2001), 53.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 52-53.

The spiritual agony of the “loss of the felt experience of God’s presence” is accompanied by grief, but Simmons and Wilson argue that this spiritual loss is also an opportunity for “an adventure filled with fresh revelations.”⁵¹⁷ Therefore, future research on aging should deal with this theme in order to help older adults find new ways of experiencing God’s presence and have dynamic relationships with God as they age.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 53-54.

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Appendix 1

CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
1325 N. College Avenue, Claremont, CA, USA

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for The Despair of the Aging Process of Korean American Protestant Older Adults

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Yong Hwan Kim, a Ph.D. student in Practical Theology with a concentration in Spiritual Care and Counseling at the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, CA. I am conducting this research as part of my dissertation which involves interviews. My research advisor is Dr. Bidwell, professor of Practical Theology, Spiritual Care and Counseling at Claremont School of Theology. You can reach him by calling (909) 447-2528 and by emailing dbidwell@cst.edu. You can reach me at 909-767-9590 or yonghwan.kim@cst.edu. Please feel free to contact either of us if you have questions or issues about this study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the despair of Korean American Protestant older adults who are sixty-five years old and older. This research specifically focuses on the relationships between despair and the social location of Korean American immigrants. This research pays attention to the physical, psychological, spiritual, and social environment and ongoing identity formation process in which self-esteem is formed. This research will analyze the findings from the interview from the frame of practical theological reflection to provide older adults and pastors of Korean American Protestant churches with psychological, theological, and social understandings. I investigate how the older adults describe their despair, the unique characteristics of their despair, and the physical, psychological, spiritual and social factors that cause them to experience despair. The findings will promote pastoral theological reflection and practice for Korean American Protestant older adults and provide opportunity for pastors who serve Korean American Protestant churches to develop effective ministries.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may change your mind at any time and stop participating without any penalty even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

Based on your consent, I will ask questions about your experiences of your aging process. I will ask you a few questions. Please be as frank as you can.

Duration

The interview will take 1-2 hours of your time.

Risks

There are no known risks associated with the qualitative research. However, there might be potential risks to exploring your negative experiences and related emotions. You might experience anger, depression, shame, and/or embarrassment when you talk about your past hardships. It is also possible that you become disappointed or angry with God when you think that you cannot find God's presence and help in your hardships. These issues will be dealt with by providing space and time in which you can freely express your emotions and thoughts and one free 1-hour counseling session will be provided to you if you want.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to contribute and uncover understands of the despair of Korean American older adults and to develop proper ministries with Korean American older adults.

Confidentiality

I will not be sharing personal information about you to anyone. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have an identification number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what your number is and I will lock that information up with a lock and password in a personal hard disk. After my dissertation is completed, all of the personal information will be completely destroyed.

Sharing the Results

I will use the results of my interviews as part of my Ph.D. dissertation. The dissertation will be submitted to the faculty of the Claremont School of Theology in November 2014 and, after its completion, a copy of the dissertation will be available in the Claremont School of Theology library. When I publish all or part of this study or refer to it in published writing in the future, in all events, I will continue to protect your privacy, as described above.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You have the right to refuse or withdraw from the interview without any penalty if you do not feel comfortable during the interview.

동의서

한인 기독교 노인들의 노화의 과정에서 발생하는 절망에 대한 연구

1 부: 본 설문에 대한 설명

연구자 소개

본 연구자는 캘리포니아 클레어몬트에 위치한 클레어몬트신학대학원에서 목회상담 박사과정에서 공부하는 김용환목사입니다. 이 인터뷰는 저의 박사과정 논문의 일부입니다. 저의 지도교수는 클레어몬트신학대학과 클레어몬트 링컨 대학에서 실천신학분야에서 목회상담을 가르치고 있는 Duane Bidwell 교수입니다. 질문이 있으신 경우 Bidwell 교수에게 문의를 하실 수 있습니다 ((909) 447-2528, dbidwell@cst.edu). 이 연구에 대하여 문제가 있는 경우 언제든지 교수님께 연락하시길 바랍니다.

연구목적

이 연구의 목적은 65 세 이상의 한인기독교 이민자들의 절망을 연구하는 것입니다. 이 연구는 특별히 한인 노인들의 절망과 사회적 위치의 연관성에 중점적으로 초점을 둡니다. 이 연구는 육체적, 심리적, 영적, 사회적 환경과 자존감이 형성되는 자아형성 과정에 주의를 기울입니다. 이 연구는 한인 노인들과 이민교회를 담당하는 한인목회자들에게 심리적, 신학적, 사회적 이해를 제공하기 위하여 실천신학적 고찰의 틀 속에서 이루어진 인터뷰에서 발견한 것들을 분석할 것입니다. 저는 한인 노인들이 어떻게 절망을 묘사하고, 한인 노인들의 절망의 독특한 특징과 한인 노인들이 절망하도록 하는 육체적, 사회적, 영적, 사회적 요소들을 조사할 것입니다. 여기서 발견된 것들은 한인노인들을 위한 목회신학적 고찰을 증진시킬 것이며 이민교회를 섬기는 한인목회자들에게 효과적인 사역을 발전시킬 수 있는 기회를 제공할 것입니다.

자발적 참여

이 연구에 참여하는 것은 전적으로 자발적인 것입니다. 언제든지 마음을 바꿀 수 있으며 이전에 참여하기로 동의하셨더라도 언제든지 아무런 불이익 없이 참여를 중단하실 수 있습니다.

과정

동의하신 것을 바탕으로, 노화의 과정에 겪은 귀하의 경험에 대한 질문을 드릴 것입니다. 가급적 솔직하게 답변해 주세요.

기간

인터뷰는 1 시간에서 2 시간 가량 소요됩니다.

위험

현상학적 연구방법에 대한 알려진 위험은 없습니다. 그러나, 귀하의 부정적인 경험과 이와 연관된 감정을 살필 때 잠재적 위험이 있을 수 있습니다. 귀하의 과거의 어려움에 대하여 이야기 할 때 분노, 우울, 수치 그리고/혹은 당황함을 경험할 수 있습니다. 또한 귀하의 어려움 가운데 하나님의 존재와 도움을 발견할 수 없다고 생각한다면 하나님께 실망하거나 분노를 느낄 수 있습니다. 이 문제들은 귀하가 자유롭게 감정과 생각을 표현할 수 있는 공간을 통해 다루어 질 것이며 만약 귀하가 원할 경우 1 시간의 무료상담을 본 연구자가 제공할 수 있습니다.

유익

귀하에게 직접적으로 돌아가는 혜택은 없지만, 귀하의 참여가 한인노인들의 절망에 대한 이해에 공헌을 할 것이며 한인 노인들을 위한 적절한 사역을 발전시킬 것입니다.

비밀

저는 귀하의 개인적 정보를 그 누구와도 나누지 않을 것입니다. 이 연구를 통해서 얻게 되는 정보는 개인적으로 보관할 것입니다. 귀하에 관한 모든 정보는 실명대신 확인번호를 가지게 됩니다. 오직 본 연구자만이 귀하의 번호를 알 수 있고 모든 정보는 본 연구자의 개인컴퓨터 안에서 비밀번호를 통해 보호를 받습니다. 연구가 끝난 뒤에는 모든 개인적 정보는 파기됩니다.

결과 공유

인터뷰의 결과는 본 연구자의 박사과정 논문을 위해 사용될 것입니다. 이 논문은 2014 년 11 월경에 클레어몬트 신학대학원의 교수진에 제출되고, 완성 후에는 클레어몬트 신학대학원 도서관에서 볼 수 있습니다. 본 연구자가 미래에 이 연구의 전체 혹은 일부를 출판하거나 출판된 글을 통해 언급할 때 위에 언급된 대로 귀하의 개인정보를 계속적으로 보호받을 것입니다.

거절하거나 중단할 수 있는 권리

만약 인터뷰 도중 불편함을 느낀다면 아무런 불이익 없이 인터뷰를 거절하거나 중단할 수 있는 권리를 귀하는 가지고 있습니다.

2 부: 동의서

나는 김용환목사에 의하여 진행되는 박사과정 논문의 일부로서 한인 기독교 노인들의 절망에 관한 연구에 참여하도록 초대받았습니다

나는 위의 정보를 읽었거나 설명을 들었습니다. 나는 이 정보에 대하여 질문을 할 수 있는 기회를 가졌고 그 질문에 대해 만족스러운 대답을 들었습니다. 나는 자발적으로 이 연구에 참여하기를 동의합니다.

만약 귀하가 이 문서에 있는 정보에 대한 이해에 만족하고 이 연구에 참여하기를 동의한다면, 두 개의 동일한 양식에 서명을 해주시고 날짜를 적어주세요.

참여자의 이름 _____

참여자의 서명 _____

날짜 _____
일/ 월/ 년도

동의를 구하는 연구자의 진술

본 연구자는 본 문서에 있는 정보를 참여자에게 정확하게 설명했으며, 최선을 다하여 위에 주어진 정보를 참여자가 이해한 것을 확인했습니다.

본 연구자는 본 연구에 대하여 질문할 수 있는 기회를 참여자가 부여 받았으며 참여자의 모든 질문에 최선을 다해 적절하게 대답했음을 확인합니다. 참여자가 동의하도록 강요하지 않았으며, 참여자의 동의는 자유롭고 자발적으로 주어졌음을 확인합니다.

이 동의서의 복사본이 참여자에게 제공되었습니다.

동의를 받는 연구자 이름 _____

동의를 받는 연구자 서명 _____

날짜 _____
일/ 월/ 년도

Appendix 2

Possible Interview Questions

I plan to ask following interview questions, but they are not all required questions, but a starting point for an open ended interview. I will ask appropriate follow-up questions. All of these questions will be translated and asked in Korean.

A. Tell me about motivation and circumstances that led you immigrate to the United States of America?

미국에 이민을 오게 된 동기와 상황을 설명해 주시기 바랍니다.

B. How was your overall experience settling in the U.S.? What are the biggest adjustments compared to your life in Korea?

미국에서의 삶이 전반적으로 어떠했습니까? 한국에서의 삶과 비교할 때 가장 큰 변화는 무엇입니까?

C. What makes you feel good about yourself?

자신에 대해서 긍정적으로 생각하게끔 하는 것은 무엇입니까?

D. What makes you feel bad about yourself?

자신에 대해서 부정적으로 생각하게끔 하는 것은 무엇입니까?

E. What do you experience as the positive aspects of aging?

노화에 대한 긍정적인 경험은 무엇입니까?

F. What do you experience as the negative aspects of aging?

노화에 대한 부정적인 경험은 무엇입니까?

G. What makes you feel your life is meaningful?

인생이 의미가 있다고 느끼게 만드는 것은 무엇입니까?

F. What kinds of comments have you heard from your friends, relatives and neighbors who are older than 65 about their own aging processes?

65 세가 넘는 친구들, 친척들, 이웃들이 자신의 노화의 과정에 대해서 어떤 말들을 들었나요?

G. What kinds of comments do you get from young people about being old?

젊은 사람들로 부터 나이를 먹는 것에 대해서 어떤 이야기들을 들으셨나요?